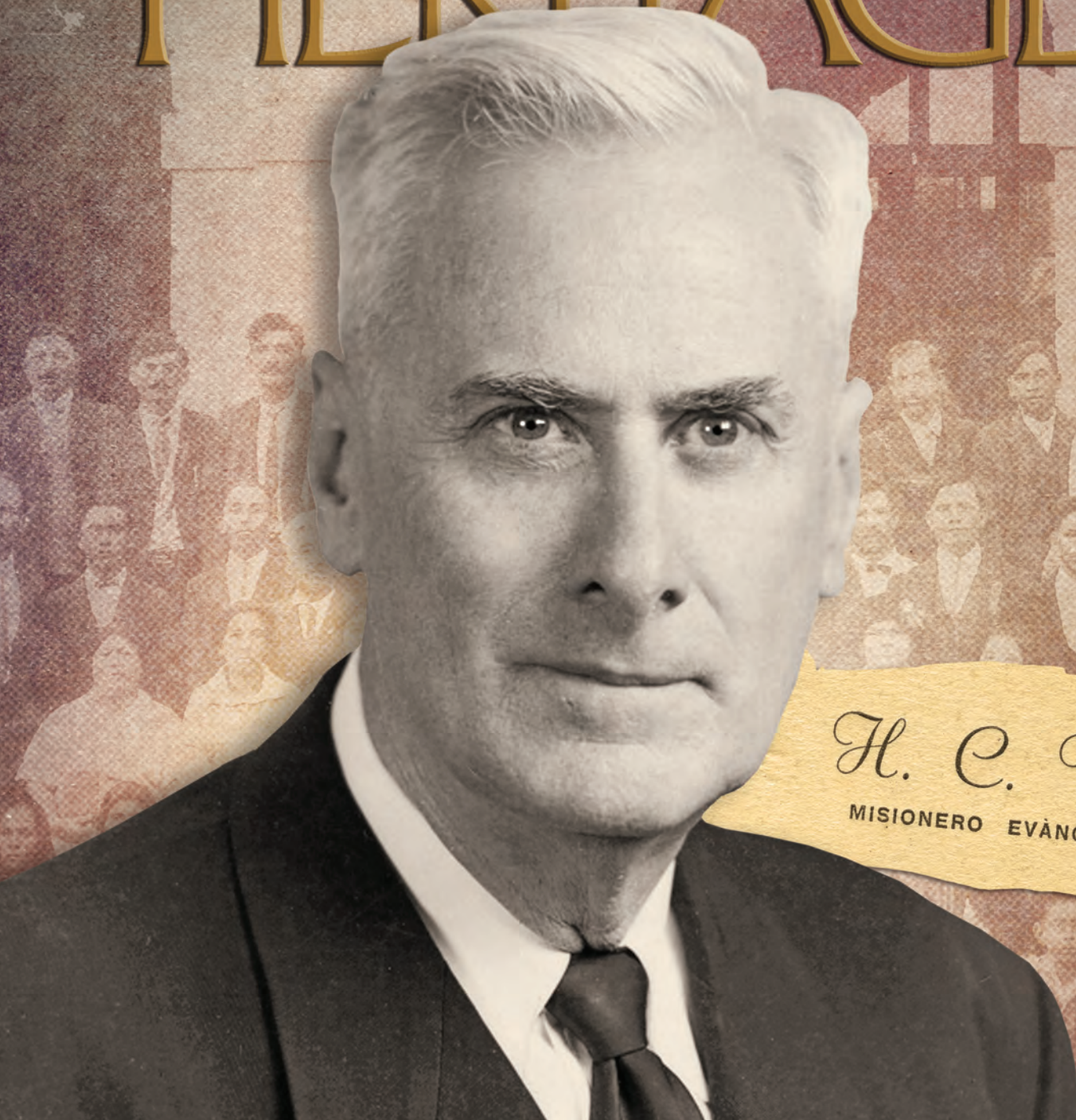


Assemblies of God

HERITAGE



H. C. Ball
MISIONERO EVANGÉLICO

Hispanic Pentecostalism

2011

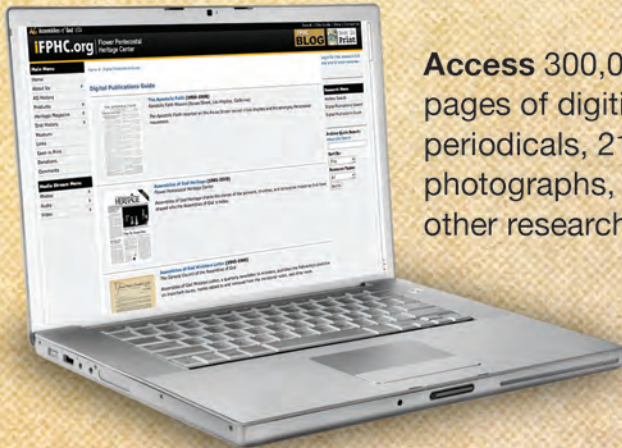
- Dionissy and Olga Zaplishny
- World Assemblies of God Fellowship
- Assemblies of God Higher Education
- Lillian Trasher
- Howard A. Goss
- Bishop J. O. Patterson, Sr.

Volume 31

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From the Editor: Wanted: Lost Treasures

By Darrin J. Rodgers

I sometimes jokingly tell visitors to the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center (FPHC) that my alter ego is Indiana Jones, the iconic film character who finds adventure overseas while in search of the Ark of the Covenant and other artifacts.

While the comparison often elicits laughter and good-natured ribbing about whether I own a fedora or dine on chilled monkey brains, it helps younger people to grasp the significance of the FPHC's mission. Indiana Jones and I do not share the same wardrobe or palate, but both of us do hunt for lost treasures.

Why should we care if Assemblies of God young people connect with their heritage? A movement cannot survive unless its younger members are inspired by the stories and identity crafted by those members who used to be young. The young, then, must feel welcome to build upon that foundation and to graft themselves onto the Pentecostal vine.

Stewards of a Sacred Tradition

My colleagues and I oversee the largest Pentecostal archive in the world — a treasure trove of artifacts, printed materials, oral histories, photographs, and memorabilia. Our mission is to collect, preserve, and make accessible materials documenting the history of the Assemblies of God and the broader Pentecostal and charismatic movements.

The FPHC is not merely a

repository of old things; archivists and historians are stewards of a sacred tradition. Protestants, while valuing the authority of Scripture, sometimes disregard the value of tradition. But as we study how God has acted and how we have responded (rightly and wrongly) throughout history, we are able to view His story (Scripture and tradition) as intertwined with our own to create that larger, holy narrative.

What, then, constitutes the Pentecostal tradition? A history is most valuable when it recognizes challenges along with successes. Pentecostals need to understand how they got to where they are on their pilgrimage of faith.

The Pentecostal tradition should be broadly construed to include stories, themes, and people from across the various ethnic, linguistic, social, and political divides. A narrow historical self-

understanding will likely result in a limited future. Learning from Pentecostal history builds bridges across cultural and chronological chasms and helps to lay a broader foundation for the church as it grows.

In a culture increasingly hostile to biblical faith, Pentecostals cannot afford to reject communion with other Christians who have shared beliefs and values. If any Christian group walls itself off to form its own isolated ecclesial community, it will cease to benefit from what others might have to share.

Understanding history in these ways reinforces the Pentecostal movement's core values by including at the table more people who uphold the same beliefs. It also encourages dialogue about differences on secondary issues, providing crucial perspective concerning what matters most.

Pentecostal history is anything but dull. It puts flesh and bones onto our doctrinal statements and reads like a novel replete with complex plots and colorful characters who strive for the highest of ideals but struggle with their own human frailties.

This Issue

You are holding the 100th issue of *Assemblies of God*

Heritage. Since the first issue, produced in the fall of 1981, we have published a total of 3,134 pages of stories about our inspiring Pentecostal past. All back issues have been digitized and are accessible for free on the FPHC website, www.iFPHC.org. Hard copies of most issues are also available for sale.

This issue showcases the stories of several Assemblies of God missionaries and church planters. H. C. Ball and Alice Luce are probably the two most important early Assemblies of God missionaries to Hispanic Americans. The first article offers a warm account of Ball's early ministry. The second tells about two women missionaries mentored by Luce — Florence J. Murcutt and Jovita Bonilla — whose stories have been largely untouched by historians until now.

Next, you will read the first English-language story of the romance, ministry, and persecution of Dionissy and Olga Zaplishny, pioneers of Pentecost in Bulgaria.

An impressively researched article by Beth Baron, an expert on Middle Eastern history, shows the significance of Lillian Trasher and her Assemblies of God orphanage in the social context of colonial and postcolonial Egypt.

Next, a history of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship shows how the various national organizations united for the purpose of world evangelism while carefully protecting the indigenously church principles that

helped them to grow in the first place.

What will the landscape of Assemblies of God higher education look like in the future? With rapid changes occurring in churches and in society, it is hard to make a prediction. Although we may not know higher education's future, we can study its past to gain perspective. Toward that end, this issue includes an overview of the history of Assemblies of God higher education.

Howard Goss, an important founder of the Assemblies of God, is often overlooked because he identified with the Oneness movement and left the Assemblies of God in 1916. A colorful account of his early life and ministry gives insight into the culture and worldview of early Pentecostals.

Finally, this issue announces the donation of the personal papers of Church of God in Christ Bishop J. O. Patterson, Sr. to the FPHC. His widow, who made the donation, stated: "I want to send a signal that our two churches can and should cooperate in areas like education and historical archives."

An Urgent Call to Preserve Our Heritage

The stories of our Pentecostal past, from across the movement and right up to the present, have formed our identity. But these stories are disappearing every day.

Pentecostals, historically, have been focused on evangelism and missions — areas in which they

are second to none. They have been less careful about leaving a historical record of their activities. Irreplaceable historical materials are being thrown away every day. Please help us save the lost and rescue the perishing — that is the lost and perishing historical treasures!

Do you have old Pentecostal magazines, books, songbooks, or tracts that should be preserved? Do you know someone with ministry-related photographs or old Bible school yearbooks in their attic or basement? Please consider depositing those materials at the FPHC. We would like to preserve and make them accessible to those who write the history books.

The FPHC collects materials from the broader Pentecostal and charismatic movements, including denominations other than the Assemblies of God. We are missing many publications produced by districts, evangelists, Bible schools, and local congregations. Materials published outside of the U.S. or in non-English languages are particularly important to locate and preserve. Are you uncertain whether the FPHC would be interested in your collection? I encourage you to contact us. I would be delighted to discuss whether your materials would help fill in the gaps in our collections. ✝

Darrin J. Rodgers, M.A., J.D., is director of the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center and editor of *Heritage* magazine.



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H. C. Ball

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Whatever the Cost: The Formative Years of H. C. Ball, Pioneer of Hispanic Pentecostalism

By Bruce Rosdahl

He was only fourteen years old, still in high school, and did not speak Spanish. Only two weeks before, he had committed his life to Christ. Yet H. C. Ball stood ringing the bell at the schoolhouse in Ricardo, Texas, wondering if anyone would come to his first evangelistic outreach to Hispanics. The thought crossed his mind, “Would I even be able to speak with those who might attend?”

This setting did not hold much promise for the launching of one of the pioneer missionaries of the Assemblies of God (AG). But the burden that Ball felt for the Hispanic community, coupled with his divine call to missions, meant this young man was not daunted by difficult circumstances. His inauspicious beginning revealed the character of a great missionary in the making. Ball is representative of those early entrepreneurial Pentecostal missionaries whose vision and courage superseded the obstacles they encountered.

Ball’s initial evangelistic effort is paradigmatic for his life and ministry. He began his missionary endeavors at a time when the young Pentecostal movement had limited monetary resources, virtually no programs, and undeveloped philosophies. In a candid statement, Ball admitted, “When I commenced to do missionary work among the Mexicans, I had never heard of the ‘Indigenous Plan.’ If I had I would not have understood the term.”¹ Ball’s method in the beginning was simple: he saw a need and he took action. The subsequent years, however, revealed a man who historian Gary McGee identified as “one of the most farsighted and

creative missionary strategists in the Assemblies of God.”² This article examines those formative years in Ball’s ministry that demonstrate his ingenuity and developing indigenous philosophy.

The Call to Missions

Henry Cleophas Ball was born in Brooklyn, Iowa, on February 18, 1896. His mother was a Methodist and his father a Quaker, but his father passed away when Ball was only eight. As a child, Ball was very sick and suffered from spinal meningitis in 1900, followed by rheumatism in 1906. His physical illness developed into lung trouble, and physicians advised his mother that she needed to move to a drier climate. Consequently, in 1907 his mother and grandfather took Henry south to a small settlement in Amistad, New Mexico.

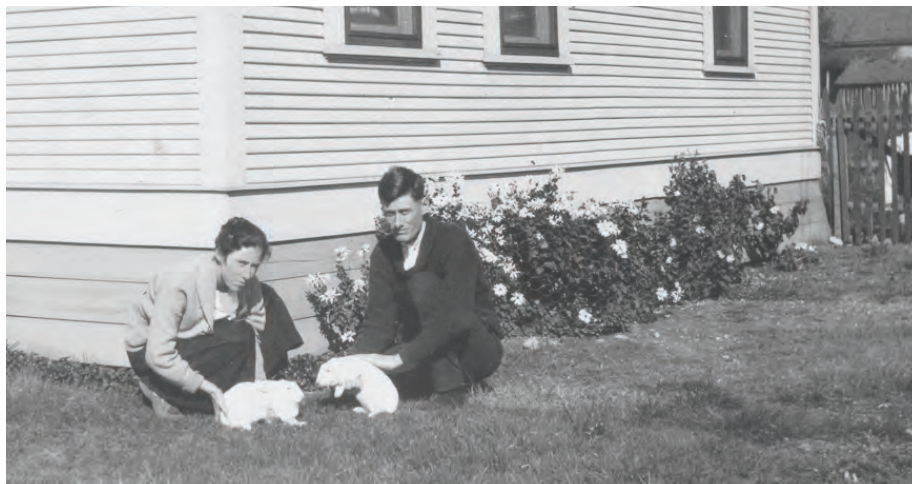
Unable to secure a homestead after a year, they heard of an American settlement in southern Mexico and determined to move. In 1908 the family set out in a covered wagon pulled by three burros for the three-month trek through Texas to the Rio Grande Valley and beyond. Once they reached Riviera,

Ball is representative of those early entrepreneurial Pentecostal missionaries whose vision and courage superseded the obstacles they encountered.

they found the valley was flooded and impassible. This forced the travelers to abandon their plans to go to Mexico. Instead they headed nine miles north to a little community called Ricardo, Texas. Here the family purchased ten acres of land to build their homestead.³

Two years later, the trajectory of H. C. Ball's life would change. One of the teachers in Ricardo was a Christian and impacted young Henry, who accepted Christ on November 6, 1910, while attending a service at the Union Church under the ministry of a Baptist preacher. But since his mother was a Methodist, Ball decided to join the Methodist church in nearby Kingsville. Approximately ten days after his conversion, Ball's pastor invited him to attend a missionary service in Kingsville.

While listening to the ministry of a missionary from Venezuela, Ball felt a call to missionary service to the Mexicans. It is important to note that Ball was only fourteen years old and still a student at Henrietta King High School. At this young age one might assume that Ball would take time to study Spanish, finish high school, attend college or seminary and then begin his missionary efforts. To the contrary, Ball acted immediately upon this call and began an outreach at the



H. C. and Sunshine Ball, sitting outside with their pet rabbits in front of their home at 1811 Durango Street, San Antonio, Texas, ca. 1926.

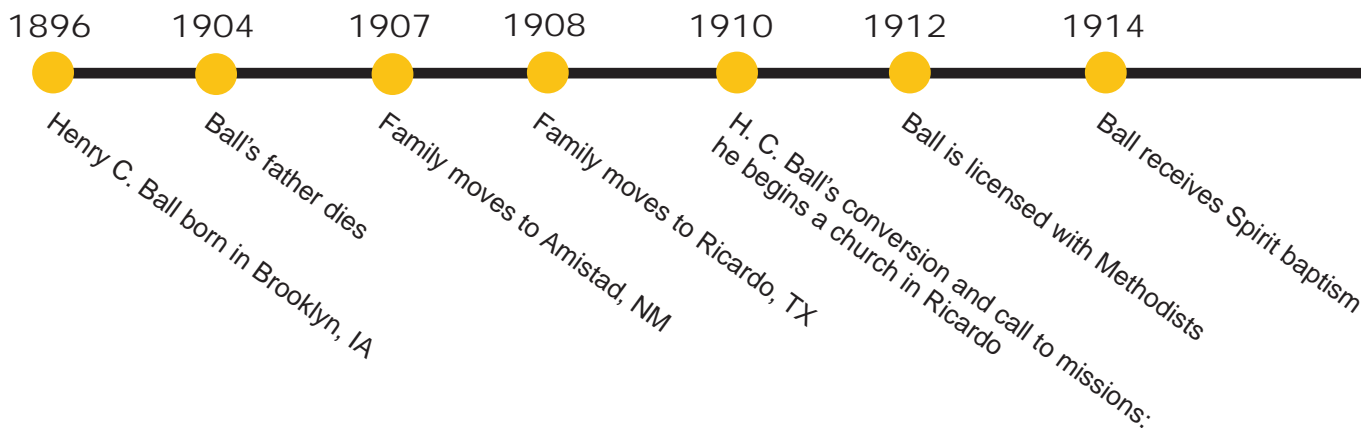
schoolhouse in Ricardo. On Tuesday evening Ball felt the call to missions; by the next Sunday he was holding his first evangelistic service.

Encouraged by his Methodist pastor, Ball went to meet with an elderly Spanish widow whose husband had been a Methodist minister. She taught Ball the simple phrase in Spanish, "Sunday afternoon in the school house." She also allowed him to copy *We Praise Thee, O God* from a Spanish hymnal.⁴ Armed with his memorized invitation, Ball spent Saturday going door-to-door inviting people to the service by repeating his one line. When Sunday came he rang the school bell "long and loud

and waited for my congregation."⁵ Thankfully, two individuals attended that service — Juanita Bazán and Mr. Villareal. Mrs. Bazán later became the first convert under Ball's ministry.

The order of service was simple: Ball sang the one Spanish hymn, read the Lord's Prayer, sang the same hymn a second time and then had Mrs. Bazán read a few verses from Romans 12. After she read from the Bible, Mrs. Bazán and the gentleman spoke for some thirty minutes. Ball could not understand the conversation, but he later discovered that Mrs. Bazán, though a devout Catholic, had attended some Protestant services and was explaining some of the beliefs to

..... The Early Years of H.C. Ball



the man.

Once they finished talking, Ball had them sing the same hymn a third time and Ball dismissed the service by pointing to the door. Within the next six months, Ball had improved his command of the Spanish language, and he was able to preach to a certain degree. In 1912, at the age of sixteen, the Methodists gave Ball a license to preach. He continued to minister to the Hispanic community in Ricardo.

On November 7, 1914, just four years and a day after Ball's conversion, he experienced another transformation. Ball was in his last year of high school and often sat under a particular tree to eat his lunch. One day he noticed a tent was pitched to hold evangelistic services with Felix A. Hale, a Pentecostal minister with the newly-formed AG. Although initially reluctant, Ball attended a few of the services and soon was baptized in the Holy Spirit.⁶

Ball's acceptance of the Pentecostal message placed him at odds with his own Methodist denomination and members in his congregation. After a meeting with his supervisors, he was dismissed.⁷ On January 10, 1915, a month shy of his nineteenth birthday, Ball was ordained by the AG. His ordination papers were signed by J.



Congregation standing in front of Templo Cristiano in San Antonio, Texas in 1920. This church was first pastored by H. C. Ball and later by Demetrio Bazan.

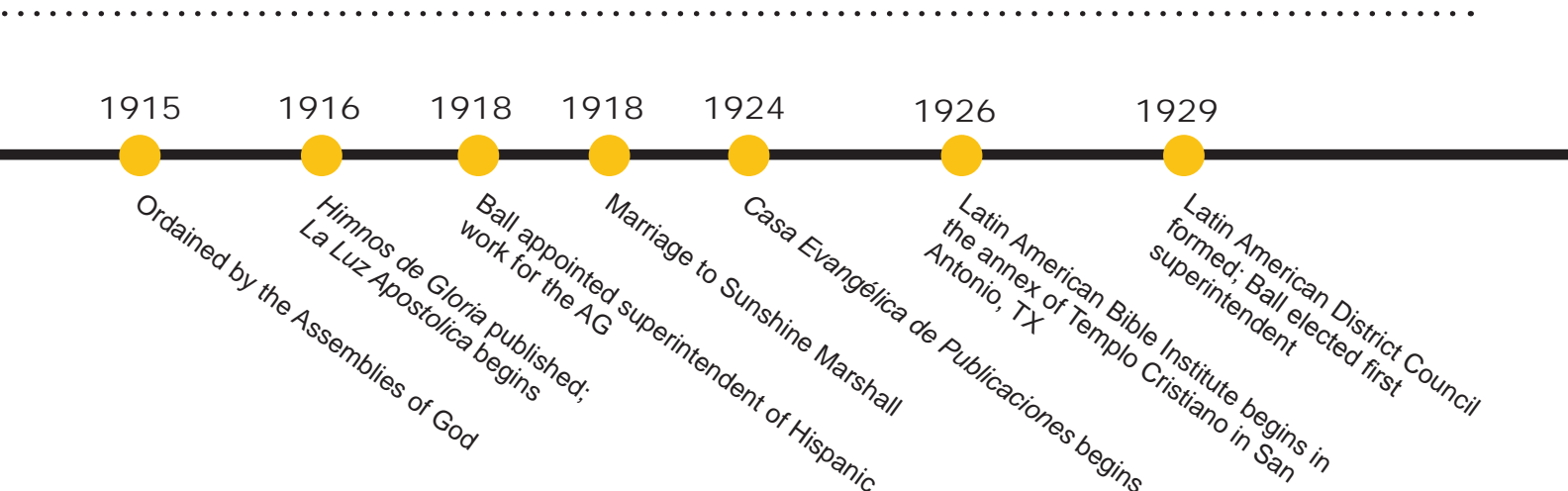
W. Welch, Arch P. Collins, Stanley Frodsham, and E. N. Richey. This marked the beginning of seventy-four years of ministry in the Assemblies of God.

Full Gospel Publications

Even as a young man of eighteen Ball recognized the need for Pentecostal literature in Spanish. He published his first tract on a handpress in 1915 on the subject of the baptism

in the Holy Spirit. In September of the following year, he published the first edition of *La Luz Apostolica* (The Apostolic Light) on the same handpress. It later became the official magazine of the Latin American District Council of the AG and was published every month for over seventy years. Eventually the need was greater than any handpress could handle, and Ball outsourced his printing.

It became clear to Ball that there was





La Luz Apostolica

Do you remember *La Luz Apostolica*, the magazine published by H.C. Ball from 1916 until 1973? You can now read old issues of *La Luz Apostolica* online! Just select the “Digital Publications Search” tab on the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center (FPHC) website: www.iFPHC.org.

The FPHC is missing most issues of *La Luz Apostolica* prior to 1965. Do you have old issues that will help complete the collection? Please consider donating them to the FPHC. Historians need access to these and other Spanish-language Pentecostal publications so that they can include the sacred stories of Hispanic Pentecostal pioneers in the history books.

To learn which issues of *La Luz Apostolica* are needed, check the Digital Publications Search or contact the FPHC by e-mail (archives@ag.org) or phone (877-840-5200).

.....

¿Recuerda usted *La Luz Apostólica*, la revista que publicó H.C. Ball desde 1916 hasta 1973? ¡Ahora usted puede leer en la red los antiguos números de *La Luz Apostólica*! Seleccione la opción “Digital Publications Search” en la página web del Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center (FPHC): www.iFPHC.org.

El FPHC quiere completar su colección de revistas *La Luz Apostólica*. Nos falta la mayoría de los números que se publicaron antes de 1965. ¿Tiene usted algunos de estos números que completarían nuestra colección? Le agradeceríamos que considerara donarlos al FPHC. Nuestros historiadores y otros escritores necesitan tener acceso a esta y otras publicaciones pentecostales, con el fin de citarlas en los libros de historia acerca de los pioneros pentecostales.

Si quiere saber cuáles son los números de la *La Luz Apostólica* que el FPHC no tiene, tenga la bondad de revisar el Digital Publications Search o comuníquese por e-mail con el FPHC (archives@ag.org) o llame por teléfono al 877-840-5200.

a need to establish a publishing house for Spanish-language Pentecostal publications. In 1924 Ball founded the *Casa Evangélica de Publicaciones* (Gospel Publishing House) in San Antonio at 714 Cibolo Street.⁸ The initial Chandler-Price press was a gift from Highway Tabernacle in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where E. S. Williams served as pastor. From this plant Ball published hymnals, tracts, Sunday school quarterlies, textbooks for Bible schools, *La Luz Apostolica*, and other literature.

The publishing house moved in 1947 to Springfield, Missouri, where it acquired more modern facilities that would help meet the increasing demand for Spanish literature. The publishing operation received the new name of *Editorial Vida* (Life Publishers) and eventually relocated to Miami, Florida.⁹

Hymnology

H. C. Ball, from the beginning of his ministry, encouraged the singing of hymns and gospel songs in Spanish. It is possible that Ball’s contribution to Pentecostal hymnody is one of his most enduring legacies in Latin America. When Ball began his work, he discovered that no Spanish Pentecostal hymnals existed. To remedy this, in 1916 Ball published one thousand copies of a Spanish hymnal, *Himnos de Gloria* (Hymns of Glory), which he compiled. Most of the hymns were simply translations of English songs, but Ball did contribute the words and music to a few hymns.

When asked why he wrote it, Ball’s response was typical of his mindset — “It was needed.”¹⁰ The first two editions contained words only. Ball published the first edition with musical notation in 1921 with money he received from his father’s estate. Today, over one million copies of *Himnos de Gloria* have been sold



across Latin America and have been used in numerous denominations. Ball went on to publish five more hymnals,

H. C. Ball, from the beginning of his ministry, encouraged the singing of hymns and gospel songs in Spanish.

but none matched the popularity of *Himnos de Gloria*.

One criticism leveled against Ball's hymnal is its lack of hymns composed by Latinos.¹¹ However, *Himnos de Gloria* was a good-faith attempt to fill an immediate need, given limited

resources. The Hispanic AG work was still in its infancy in 1916, consisting of fewer than fifty people meeting in a small canvas building on the back of Ball's farmhouse. As the movement grew, new songs emerged from within the Hispanic Pentecostal movement. Ball, in a 1949 article, reflected about the importance of developing indigenous songs:

As the national church develops on the various mission fields the missionary is cognizant of the fact that in their own homes his converts are either composing new hymns, both words and music, or are putting new tunes to the hymns already translated. Gradually as the national converts become more free in testifying, and singing special numbers they begin to introduce

these hymns. They become popular with the people because the style is familiar to them. They vibrate on the heart chords as no other hymns could ... As time passes these "native" hymns become part of the church, and eventually find their way into the hymnals, thus enriching the national church, and sometimes producing a hymn that sweeps around the globe.¹²

Those familiar with worship in Hispanic churches in the United States and in Central and South America will recognize that Ball's comments in 1949 describe the state of indigenous worship that continues to exist today.

Self-Supporting Churches

One of the early challenges Ball faced was his commitment to develop



H. C. Ball with a group of Hispanics in front of a building in Victoria, Texas for a conference of the Latin American District. Ball is standing in the very back row in the center; Francisco Olazabal is standing in the back row, 5 to the left of Ball; Alice Luce is standing in the second row, on the right side, in a light-colored dress; Demetrio Bazan is standing on the front row, on the far right, 3rd from the right; Juanita Estrada is standing to the left of Bazan. Others unidentified. Taken in the early 1920s.



H. C. and Sunshine Ball (standing in the back center) with their son, Herschel (left) with Missionaries Lois and Melvin Hodges (right). Also pictured are Rachel Crane (2nd from left) and Phyllis and Miriam Hodges (standing in front); 1936.

self-supporting churches. His understanding of indigenous principles emerged as he matured. Initially Ball was reluctant to place any financial burden on the people. There were two probable reasons for this. First, during the first four years, Ball served as a Methodist pastor and the ecclesiology called for Anglo financing and governance of the Hispanic work. Second, the dire poverty of most of the people made it unthinkable for Ball to place any financial burden on the people.

Ball described his concern, "I felt sorry for the poor Mexicans in my congregation and was even ashamed to take up an offering. When I would get hungry, I would walk to Ricardo where we had a small farm often making this trip by foot after the Sunday night service."¹³ Ball refused to place any financial responsibility on the congregants.

After Ball left Kingsville to open a new work in Brownsville, the new pastor from Kansas, Carlos Rodriguez, suffered some of the repercussions of Ball's initial philosophy. The congregation still did not support the new pastor, and within a few months Rodriguez had used up all of his savings. This analysis is not overly criti-

cal of Ball, but consistent with his own evaluation. Some thirty years later Ball wrote that he "almost ruined" this congregation by not teaching them to be self-supporting and it was a "terrible mistake."¹⁴

When Ball moved to Los Indios and then Brownsville in the summer of 1917, something had changed in his philosophy in the direction of self-supporting works. Ball began to teach the new converts to tithe and give love offerings to support the work. He reported in the *Weekly Evangel* that the Los Indios mission "has been ever since its birth a self-supporting church, supporting first myself as pastor and then a native worker, Jose Garza."¹⁵ Various factors contributed to the change, but the preeminent factor was the influence of veteran missionary Alice Luce.

Ball met Luce in 1915 when she and fellow missionary Dr. Florence Murcutt came to discuss the Mexican work on the border.¹⁶ By January 1917 Luce was working with Ball in Kingsville assisting with pastoral and evangelistic responsibilities.¹⁷ While Ball was out on evangelistic tours, she administered the ministry in his absence and assisted in rais-

ing funds for the new church building.¹⁸ Luce ministered in Kingsville until September 1917 when she, Dr. Murcutt, and Sunshine Marshall (who would later marry Ball) moved to Monterrey, Mexico to begin a new missions work.¹⁹

This meant that from January to September Luce and Ball worked together, and the veteran missionary surely influenced Ball's thinking. Luce was forty-four, and Ball was twenty-one. She was well-educated and a veteran missionary; Ball had no formal training and his ministry was still in its infancy. Luce's impact could be viewed as providential, not only on Ball, but on the broader AG. Luce's articles on indigenous church administration and planting helped to set the trajectory for the Fellowship's missiology in the United States and abroad.²⁰

Church Planting

Another indicator of Ball's indigenous methodology was his dependence upon nationals for church planting both as workers and pastors. Ball's conviction developed early out of sheer necessity. The majority of his first congregation in Ricardo consisted of migrants who worked in the cotton fields. They were forced to follow the work wherever fields were available, which could take them hundreds of miles away from Ricardo. Consequently, while the congregation experienced its first Pentecostal outpouring on July 4, 1915, by August the congregation had scattered to follow the work trail.

Ball soon began receiving reports from members of his mobile congregation, who were sharing the gospel as they traveled. Congregations began to spring up across Texas as believers witnessed to their fellow laborers and many responded to the gospel. They wrote Ball and requested that he sup-

ply pastors for these emerging churches. Ball traveled to meet and baptize the new converts, but permanent pastors were needed.

H. C. Ball later recalled, given the lack of trained pastors or missionaries, that the solution seemed clear: “to request the men that God had used in raising up these congregations to assume responsibility for them.” He further explained, “Many of these men had felt a call to preach, and in their new-born enthusiasm preached at night under the trees, or in school houses, or in rented halls. During the day they labored side by side with the members of their congregations.”²¹

One of the strongest missions of the early period began in this exact fashion in Los Indios, a community twenty miles from Brownsville. In October 1916, Miguel Guillén came from Los Indios to Kingsville to look for work.²² Guillén happened upon Ball’s congregation that had recently relocated from Ricardo. Guillén responded to the gospel message and returned to Los Indios a changed indi-



Casa Evangelica de Publicaciones in San Antonio, 1929, where H. C. Ball printed gospel books and tracts in Spanish.



Seventh annual convention of Latin-American Pentecostal workers meeting in San Jose, California in 1923. Some of those attending included H. C. Ball (back row, far left), Alice Luce (2nd row, far right), Juan Lugo, Domingo Cruz, Luis Caraballo, S. Nevarez, George Blaisdell, and L. Rodriguez.

vidual. He immediately began to testify of the change in his life. As he preached the gospel people responded. Before long a new church had been born. Alice Luce reported the exciting news to *Weekly Evangel* readers:

Early last winter a young man from there named Miguel spent a Sunday in Kingsville, heard Bro. Ball preach, and was brightly saved. He did not receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost, but went back at once to his work in Los Indios. The Lord used his earnest preaching and his consistent life to the salvation of six more; and when Bro. Ball visited them last month he found quite a little company meeting together for prayer under the leadership of Miguel ... after returning to Los Indios the Lord baptized him with the Holy Spirit, and such a mighty revival has broken out there that the young men are begging some of us to go down there and help them gather in the ripened sheaves.²³

Ball was stirred by what he witnessed in the Rio Grande Valley. Later that year he responded to Guillén’s request and moved to Los Indios and

then Brownsville to oversee the work.²⁴ Ball planned to make Brownsville the new ministry center. Within a few months, however, the AG appointed Ball superintendent of the Hispanic work, which necessitated his move to San Antonio. Hispanic pastors were installed in the churches in Los Indios, Brownsville, and Kingsville, and Ball became pastor of Templo Cristiano in San Antonio.²⁵

H. C. Ball’s solution to engage the laity was not original to him, but was a pattern he observed in Methodism. He likened the pastors to the old-time Methodist class leaders.²⁶ By employing national workers, Ball established churches on indigenous principles without being cognizant of the concept. He never waived from this basic methodology throughout his ministry. The commitment was more fully realized in 1939 when Demetrio Bazán became the first Hispanic leader of the Latin American District Council.²⁷

Latin American Bible Institute

The burgeoning work among Hispanics quickly surfaced a need for an institution to train ministers. The dialogue between Alice Luce and H.



The 1940 graduating class of the Latin American Bible School in Saspamco, Texas. Seated (l-r): Daniel Enriquez, Leandra Gomez (Garza), Angela Flores, Pilar Esquivel (Salazar), Nicolaza Garcia, Bertha Lopez (Garcia), Esther Sanchez (Martinez), Eugenia Brown (Carrasco), and Melquiades Viera. Standing (l-r): Macedonia Torres, Ramon Marquez, Fransisco Montoya, Roberto Padilla, Enrique Brown, Raul Cruz, Frederico Mena, Frank Romero, Lee Abeyta, and Jose Ibarra.

C. and Sunshine Ball birthed a vision for a ministerial training institution. As a result, two schools were founded in 1926. Both would become known as Latin American Bible Institute (LABI). Luce started the Berean Bible Institute (now LABI) in San Diego, California. The school moved to La Mesa and East Los Angeles until it settled in its present locale in La Puente.²⁸

The Balls founded LABI in San Antonio in the annex of Templo Cristiano. The school moved to Saspamco, then to Ysleta, before returning to San Antonio in 1981.²⁹ Both schools have a rich history of preparing pastors, teachers, and missionaries whose ministry has spanned the globe. The Balls and Luce, through their training of future leaders, effected an incalculable impact on generations of Hispanic churches.

The Legacy Continued

The early years in Ball's ministry

were a time of incredible vision and productivity. Consider the following accomplishments all before Ball was forty years old. He planted and pastored numerous churches, published the first Spanish-language Pentecostal hymnbook, established a publication house that served all of Latin America, began a training institution for minis-

ters, and edited a journal and Sunday school curriculum. He also organized the first convention of Spanish-speaking AG pastors (Latin American Conference) in 1918, and was elected to serve as the first superintendent of the Latin American District Council in 1929. This partial list reads like a lifetime of ministry, but it only includes the first half of his seventy-nine years of ministry.

Ball remained the superintendent of the Latin American District Council until 1939. He and Sunshine served in Santiago, Chile, as missionaries from 1941 to 1943 until his appointment as Field Secretary over Latin America required his return to Springfield. He served as field secretary for eleven years and another seven years as Secretary for Spanish Publications until 1961.

The passion and fervor of that young boy of fourteen who answered the call to missions never seemed to waver. No story illustrates this better than Ball's actions upon his "retirement" in 1961. At the age of sixty-five, H. C. and Sunshine returned to San Antonio with a burden to plant another church. He researched to find the area most in need of a church, gathered co-laborers, and began to



H. C. and Sunshine Ball, about 1975.

canvass the neighborhood door-to-door. The church *El Salvador* was born and placed under the leadership of Samuel and Rose Molina. Today the church continues to flourish with pastors David and Mabel Segovia.

When H. C. Ball was called home on May 29, 1989, he left a heritage worth much more than gold.³⁰ A few years before his promotion to glory, he penned the follow words of faith on Christmas Day 1981:

I know the Lord will never fail,
To keep His word, it shall prevail;
What ere the circumstances
may be,
His power and might will
shelter me.

I find in Christ a sure retreat,
A blessed stillness and relief,
From all the pitfalls and decay,
That now surround me every day.

He keeps my spirit and my soul,
In perfect peace amidst the toil,
And struggles in this world of woe,
I rest in Him, no fear I know.³¹ ✝



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NOTES

¹H. C. Ball, "I Learned the Indigenous Plan," *Missionary Challenge*, January 1948, 8.

²Gary B. McGee, *This Gospel Shall Be Preached*, vol. 1 (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1986), 97.

³H. C. Ball, "H. C. Ball," unpublished personal summary of Ball's life and ministry, 1964, 1, FPHC.

⁴H. C. Ball, "Notes on the experience of Brother H. C. Ball relative to the possibility

of producing a film for the Spanish Literature Department," 1964, 3, FPHC.

⁵Ball, "H. C. Ball," a typed personal summary, 2.

⁶After the tent meeting, Hale planted a church in Kingsville, which proved to be advantageous for Ball. Hale was a prominent member of the Assemblies of God in Texas and could provide guidance and support for the young minister. Hale allowed Ball's congregation to use their sanctuary when a storm destroyed the canvas church building in Ricardo. Hale's congregation paid for and constructed a permanent building for Ball's congregation that had relocated to Kingsville. It marks the first permanent church building for the Hispanic Assemblies of God.

⁷Victor De Leon, *Silent Pentecostals: A Biographical History of the Pentecostal Movement among the Hispanics in the Twentieth Century* (Taylors, SC: Faith Printing, 1979), 18.

⁸Ball, "Notes on the experience of Brother H. C. Ball," 2.

⁹Later, Zondervan Corporation purchased *Editorial Vida*.

¹⁰Carpenter, Harold R. *Assemblies of God Archives Presents Conversation with Henry and Sunshine Ball* [video interview]. Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Archives, 1985.

¹¹Daniel Ramirez contends that Ball's hymnal was the least inclusive of the Spanish hymnals of the day. See Daniel Ramirez, "Flor y Canto Apostólico: Preliminary Inquiries Into Latino Pentecostal Hymnody" (paper presented at the 23rd annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Guadalajara, Mexico: November 11-13, 1993), 13-14.

¹²H. C. Ball, "Indigenous Songs," *Missionary Challenge*, August 1949, 10.

¹³Ball, "I Learned the Indigenous Plan," 9.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵H. C. Ball, "The Present Condition of the Lower Mexican Work," *Weekly Evangel*, October 20, 1917, 9.

¹⁶Alice Luce and Florence Murcutt, a medical doctor, spent years working together among the Hispanics in California. See Everett Wilson and Ruth Marshall Wilson, "Alice E. Luce: A Visionary Victorian," in *Portraits of a Generation: Early Pentecostal Leaders*, James R. Goff Jr. and Grant Wacker, eds. (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 165.

¹⁷Alice E. Luce, "On The Mexican Border," *Weekly Evangel*, January 13, 1917, 12.

¹⁸Alice E. Luce, "Work on the Mexican Border," *Weekly Evangel*, March 3, 1917, 11; and Alice E. Luce, "Missionary Notes: Sister Alice Luce,"

Weekly Evangel, March 24, 1917, 12.

¹⁹Alice E. Luce, "Open Doors in Mexico," *Weekly Evangel*, November 17, 1917, 13.

²⁰Alice E. Luce, "Paul's Missionary Methods," *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 8, 1921, 6-7; Alice E. Luce, "Paul's Missionary Methods," *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 22, 1921, 6, 11; and Alice E. Luce, "Paul's Missionary Methods," *Pentecostal Evangel*, February 5, 1921, 6-7.

²¹Ball, "I Learned the Indigenous Plan," 8-9.

²²Miguel Guillén, *La Historia del Concilio Latino Americano de Iglesias Cristianas* (Brownsville, TX: Latin American Council of Christian Churches, 1982), 143-185.

²³Alice E. Luce, "Encouraging Work of the Mexican Work," *Weekly Evangel*, May 19, 1917, 11.

²⁴Henry C. Ball, "Opportunities for Mexican Work," *Weekly Evangel*, July 7, 1917, 12; Henry C. Ball, "Missionary Notes: Brownsville, Texas," *Weekly Evangel*, September 15, 1917, 12; and Henry C. Ball, "The Present Condition of the Lower Mexican Work," *Weekly Evangel*, October 20, 1917, 9.

²⁵Contrary to some accounts, Ball did not plant this church. Mack M. Pinson, R. F. Baker, and Felix Hale were the initial church planters. Under Ball's leadership the church flourished and became the headquarters for the Hispanic work of the Assemblies of God. It housed the church, the printing ministry, and the Bible school. See R. F. Baker, "Called to the Mexican Work," *Weekly Evangel*, July 21, 1917, 13; and Henry C. Ball, "Mexican Work in the South," *Weekly Evangel*, June 15, 1918, 3.

²⁶Ball, "Notes on the experience of Brother H. C. Ball," 4.

²⁷The Latin American District Council was formed in 1929. Ball served as the superintendent from 1929-1939.

²⁸Dr. A Tommy Casarez is the president of LABI in La Puente. For more information see www.labi.edu.

²⁹Dr. Monte Madsen is the president of LABI in San Antonio. For more information see www.labitx.org.

³⁰For additional information on H. C. Ball, see Inez Spence, *H. C. Ball: Man of Action*. —Heroes of the Conquest Series, No. 13. (Springfield, MO: Foreign Missions Department, n.d.) and Gary B. McGee, "Pioneers of Pentecost: Alice E. Luce and Henry C. Ball," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 5:2 (Summer 1985): 4-6, 12-15.

³¹H. C. Ball, "Faithful Lord," handwritten poem, 1981, FPHC.



Dr. Florence J. Murcutt and Jovita Bonilla: Pioneer Missionaries to Hispanic-Americans

By Mikeuel Peterson

Hispanics constitute the second largest ethnic group within the U.S. Assemblies of God (AG), growing from 18% of adherents in 2004 to 20.1% of adherents in 2009. Despite the impressive size and growth of Hispanics in the AG, the stories of how God has worked through Hispanic Pentecostal churches have often been left out of the history books.

The title of Victor DeLeon's 1979 history, *The Silent Pentecostals*, highlighted this marginalization of Hispanic Pentecostals. He wrote that Hispanics "did not receive the recognition they deserved," because they were minorities who did not possess the educational and cultural advantages of Anglo church members.¹ The best-known pioneer AG missionaries to Hispanics included Henry C. Ball (1896-1989), Alice E. Luce (1873-1955), Juan L. Lugo (1890-1984), and Francisco Olazábal (1886-1937). However, countless other largely unheralded men and women spread the Pentecostal flame among Hispanics.

This article shares the stories of two of those lesser-known pioneers: Dr. Florence J. Murcutt and Jovita T. Bonilla. Murcutt — a British outsider — was a missionary, evangelist, medical doctor and surgeon. Bonilla — a Mexican insider — was a minister, writer, and educator. Together, they were mentored by Alice E. Luce, legendary AG educator and missionary to Hispanics.² Murcutt and Bonilla hailed from vastly different backgrounds, but they

united in the common goal of reaching Hispanic-Americans for Christ.

Florence J. Murcutt, M.D. (1868–1935)

Florence Josephine Murcutt was born to English parents in Australia in 1868. She immigrated to the United States in 1901. Murcutt had graduated in 1907 from the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania (WMCP; now Drexel University College of Medicine), the world's first medical school specifically for women.³

According to the 1910 census, she was both a physician and a surgeon.⁴

Murcutt was an Australian Jewess who was brought up in the Jewish faith. Her mother taught her that Jesus was not the Son of God. But Murcutt had an inquiring mind, and after her mother died she decided to read the Bible for herself. She read it, cover to cover, in six weeks.⁵ Sometime later, through the "instrumentality and prayers" of

Dr. Jenny Trout,⁶ Murcutt became a Christian. She often referred to Trout, who was a fellow graduate of WMCP, as her "spiritual mother."⁷

The story of Murcutt's conversion to Christianity is an interesting one. She was saved through the ministry of speaking in tongues. Her first contact with Pentecostals was in Vancouver, British Columbia, where she heard early Pentecostal missionary Lillian Garr give a message in tongues and interpretation. According to Pentecostal jour-

Murcutt and Bonilla hailed from vastly different backgrounds, but they united in the common goal of reaching Hispanic-Americans for Christ.



Congregation of Spanish Pentecostal Assembly, Honolulu, HI, 1933. Pastor Juan R. Castor and wife are seated in the center. Sitting just right of Juan Castor are Alice Luce and Florence Murcutt.

nalist Stanley Frodsham, “the very moment [Murcutt] heard the speaking in tongues she was convinced it was of God.”⁸

Later, while traveling from Vancouver to Los Angeles, she stopped in Portland, Oregon, and attended a Pentecostal camp meeting, where she witnessed signs and wonders. Many were saved, healed and filled with the Spirit at this meeting. One Canadian man, yielding to the Holy Spirit, began speaking to her in Parisian French, which she understood. Murcutt testified:

He told me I was a sinner and that I could be saved only one way, and that was through Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He told me that Jesus was the Door and that I would have to enter by that door. He told me that He is the Bread of life and that I would have to be sustained by Him. As he spoke he urged me to yield to God. This brother was absolutely unfamiliar with Parisian French but was speaking entirely under the anointing of God. He told me that this Pentecostal outpouring was of God and that it was the Latter Rain which God had promised to send in the last days... As a result of this manifestation of God’s presence,

I went on my knees and yielded to God.⁹

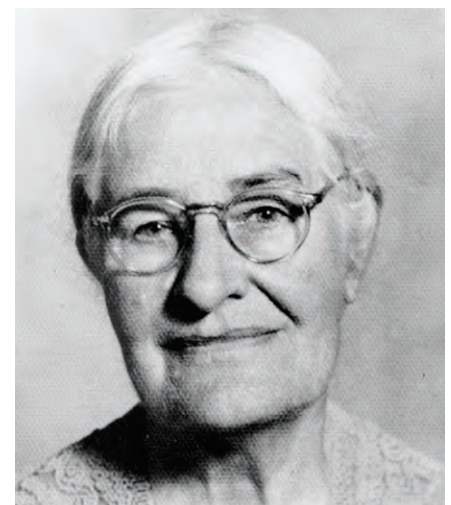
Murcutt later testified to having “received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2:4 in [her] home,” at 749½ Ocean Front Street in Santa Monica, California.¹⁰ This occurred sometime between April 1910 and autumn 1912.

After her conversion and baptism in the Holy Spirit, Murcutt devoted the remainder of her life to missionary work. God began speaking to her about going to Palestine, which she did in 1912.¹¹ There she gave out approximately five thousand Hebrew and Arabic New Testaments and gospel tracts, which she bought from the Bible Society in Port Said and Jerusalem. With Palestine under Turkish rule, and Turkey involved in the Italo-Turkish War of 1911-1912, political tensions were running high in Palestine, especially for foreigners and tourists.

Murcutt was called before the *pasha* (governor) of Palestine and accused of proselytizing Mohammedans and Jews. She explained that she intended to give the Scripture portions to her own people, the Jews, and not to Muslims. The *pasha* informed her that her life was in jeopardy and insisted that she desist from her literature dis-

tribution. She went home and prayed, but felt that the Lord did not want her to stop. Murcutt resumed her labor of love. In another two weeks she was called to appear before the *pasha* once more, and again he ordered her to cease the distribution. But in an extraordinary answer to prayer, within twenty-four hours the *pasha* was recalled to Turkey, and Murcutt was able to distribute the remainder of the literature without further incident.¹²

During Murcutt’s voyage home from Palestine, the steamship stopped at port in Liverpool, England. There, God spoke a specific person’s name to her — Mrs. Cantel of London. Obediently, Murcutt went to London



Alice Luce, ca. 1940. She mentored Florence Murcutt and Jovita Bonilla.

and found Mrs. Cantel, who ran the London Missionary Home. Murcutt took up temporary residence at the home, providing medical care for returned missionaries. Later in 1912, Alice Luce, an Anglican missionary from India, arrived at the home in a state of broken health.¹³ Luce was no stranger to Pentecost. She had experienced Spirit baptism in about 1910 on the mission field in India.¹⁴

Murcutt cared for Luce, and the two developed a “firm friendship,”¹⁵ which lasted for nearly a quarter of a century until Murcutt’s death. According to Murcutt, this meeting was instrumental in Luce’s moving to California, where “the Lord laid the needs of the Latin-American peoples very heavily upon her heart.”¹⁶

Luce and Murcutt traveled together to America, and the Lord laid it upon their hearts to study the Spanish language in order to prepare for ministry to Spanish speakers.¹⁷ After ministering with Luce for several months, Murcutt moved to Long Beach where she had a “pretty bungalow” constructed. In 1914, Luce resigned from the Anglican Church Missionary Society and moved to California, taking up residence with Murcutt. They would live there for the next three years.¹⁸

On June 18, 1915, in California, Luce and Murcutt both received ordination as missionaries by the newly-formed Assemblies of God.¹⁹ In 1916, Luce traveled to Kingsville, Texas, and became a co-laborer with Henry C. Ball, who also served as a missionary to Hispanics. Luce and her team, which included Murcutt, went to Monterrey, Mexico, in September of 1917.²⁰

While Murcutt was part of a team led by Luce, Murcutt herself almost certainly had the distinction of being the first female Pentecostal medical doctor ever to labor among the Mexican Americans and Mexicans

in California and Mexico. Murcutt’s medical and surgical skills, augmented by Luce’s nurse’s training, opened doors in their new field of labor and was very beneficial to those to whom they ministered.

Murcutt and Luce returned to the U.S. Texas border in December 1917 and headed for California. “After visiting the various Mexican assemblies in the northern part of the state in January,” Luce wrote, “Sister Murcutt

returning to southern California.²³ The following year the two ladies traveled to Luce’s homeland of England, where they visited Pentecostal congregations in Wales and spoke at the Whitsuntide Pentecostal Convention at Crosskey, Monmouthshire. Murcutt also ministered in a Spanish-speaking colony in Wales.²⁴ In Sudbrook they recruited three members of a Pentecostal family, Richard, Ralph, and Olive Williams, to attend GTBI in San Francisco.²⁵



Matt Herbison, archivist for Drexel University College of Medicine, supplied this photo taken from a 1904 article in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* that features Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania and includes a group photo of an "International group of medical students." Seated (l-r): Italian woman, Southern girl, Chinese woman, Turkish woman. Standing (l-r): Polish woman, South American woman, black girl, and an English woman. Florence J. Murcutt is in the photo, and she is believed to be the "English woman."

and I retired to Los Angeles, which the Lord seemed clearly to show was to be our headquarters, and where we have over 60,000 Mexicans in this one county alone.”²¹ By 1920, they were living at 4332 Massachusetts Avenue in Long Beach, California.²²

In 1921 Murcutt and Luce went to San Francisco to assist Robert J. Craig in his newly established Glad Tidings Bible Institute (GTBI). They taught there for a year and ministered in Spanish-speaking churches before

In 1926, Murcutt helped Luce to establish a Spanish-language Pentecostal department as part of Berean Bible Institute in San Diego. This department was the foundation for what became Latin American Bible Institute, now located in La Puente, California. Together they organized the school, taught and ministered to the students. Murcutt also helped Luce plant Spanish and English congregations in central and southern California.²⁶



Jovita Bonilla, assisting students at CBI, 1947.

Late in their ministries, Murcutt and Luce traveled to Fiji and Australia, and then returned to take up residence in Inglewood, California. Florence J. Murcutt died near Inglewood on December 13, 1935, from injuries resulting from being struck by an automobile. As a pioneer missionary with the AG, she had served sacrificially among the Mexicans and Mexican Americans along the borderlands.²⁷ She was also Alice Luce's dedicated companion and friend for almost twenty-five years.

Jovita T. Bonilla (1902–1988)

Jovita Tomasa Bonilla was born to Christian parents in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, on March 17, 1902. She earned a diploma from the Guadalajara Business School and later attended the ministry training school at Elbethel Christian Work in Chicago, Illinois, from 1924 through 1930. The Elbethel Christian Work, a

Pentecostal organization founded by prolific author Cora Harris MacIlravy, had developed an international following, largely because of its *Elbethel* magazine.²⁸

The Elbethel Christian Work ordained Bonilla as an evangelist and teacher on December 23, 1930.²⁹ Alice Luce commented that Bonilla had received “splendid training there for six years.”³⁰ A decade later, on January 15, 1940, Jovita Bonilla transferred her ordination to the Latin American District Council of the AG.³¹

Jovita Bonilla moved to California in 1930 and joined the missionary team of Luce and Murcutt. While the details of Bonilla's early life have not been documented, it is probable that Luce met Bonilla in Mexico prior to 1924, possibly in Guadalajara, during one of the annual Latin American District conventions.

Luce always was on the lookout for potential leaders, male or female. She probably also steered Bonilla to

Chicago for training at Elbethel. In California, Bonilla lived with Luce, served as her secretary, and was a close companion until Luce's death in 1955.

Because Luce held significant district responsibilities and served as Secretary and Treasurer of the Latin American Bible Institute (LABI), she certainly needed both a secretary and a good friend! Bonilla also was engaged in church planting and was a prolific author. She developed curriculum for LABI, wrote Sunday school curriculum for Gospel Publishing House, reported on the progress of the ministry among Latin Americans in numerous articles, and penned other literature.

At LABI, Bonilla taught a variety of classes, including: Christian Doctrine, Christian Evidences, Spanish Grammar, Apologetics, Personal Evangelism, Bible Introduction, and New Testament. LABI students testified of her superb teaching and her personal qualities of devotion, self-sacrifice, patience, and determination.³² Former student Catalina C. Monrada recalled, “Jovita Bonilla taught classes and was a counselor or Dean of Students. She was a strict person in manner, but helped the students because of her love for them.”³³ Among Bonilla's other responsibilities were Dean of Women, Secretary-Treasurer of LABI (after Luce's death), and the secretary of the correspondence school Luce had developed.

In 1945, Bonilla moved from Los Angeles, California, to Springfield, Missouri, to help Henry C. Ball, who was by this time the Latin America Field Secretary of the Foreign Missions Department of the AG. While in Springfield, Bonilla also taught “Spanish One” classes at Central Bible Institute (CBI; now Central Bible College) from 1945 to



Jovita Bonilla, faculty member at LABI in California, 1951.

1948. The 1946 CBI yearbook warmly stated, “Her Christ-like attitude in tenderness and love makes her classes a joy to all those who receive the benefits of her teaching ministry.”³⁴ After the school year ended in the spring of 1948, Bonilla returned to Los Angeles, where she reentered the LABI family and continued her teaching ministry.³⁵

Luce’s influence in the life of Jovita Bonilla was pervasive and profound. Many parallels existed in their two lives and callings. Luce was a prolific writer, publishing books, articles, tracts, and curriculum; Bonilla followed in her footsteps in the ministry of writing. Part of Luce’s strategy was to train others to reach their own people, and Bonilla did the same, as she disciplined students at LABI and authored literature that was distributed throughout Latin America.

The Foreign Missions Department of the AG established a Spanish-language publishing house, *La Casa de Publicaciones Evangélicas* (Evangelical Publishing House), in 1947. The publishing house invited writers to develop a variety of literature, including Sunday school mate-

rial. Bonilla wrote manuscripts for *El Compañero* (The Companion), which received wide distribution among adolescents and teenagers in Latin America. For instance, during the first quarter of 1951, the Spanish-speaking world received over 12,000 copies of the curriculum.³⁶ Imagine the impact on the thousands of Latin American young people as they read those pages prepared by one of their own!

Another important similarity between Bonilla and Luce was that they both gave up citizenship in their homelands of Mexico and England, respectively, to become citizens of the United States. Luce registered with the British Consulate on October 6, 1921, while ministering in San Francisco.³⁷ It was not until January 10, 1930, while living in Manhattan Beach, California, that Luce elected to become a U.S. citizen. At age fifty-six, Luce’s certificate of citizenship described her as being a single female of fair complex-

Seven years later, on September 24, 1937, Bonilla took the same step, giving up her Mexican citizenship to become a U.S. citizen. At age thirty-eight, Bonilla’s certificate of citizenship provided the following description: single female of dark complexion, with black eyes and hair, and standing five feet two-and-one-half inches, and weighing 130 pounds.³⁹

Growing older, Luce laid aside her teaching in the early 1950s. However, she still served as the Secretary and Treasurer of LABI. About three years after Luce’s death, Bonilla took the reins of leadership as Secretary-Treasurer of LABI, a position Luce had held until her death in 1955.⁴⁰

Bonilla stood by Luce’s side as her companion and spiritual sister through victorious and difficult times. Weeks before Luce’s death, Bonilla made an emotional journey to Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Hollywood Hills, California, where she bought a plot



Students and faculty of LABI, Los Angeles, CA, on commencement day, June 7, 1943. Standing in the second row (l-r): unidentified, Jovita T. Bonilla, Alice E. Luce, Simon R. Franco, H. C. Ball, T. Burt Evans, Francisco and Natividad Nevarez, and unidentified.

ion, with gray eyes and hair, standing five feet eight inches, and weighing 140 pounds.³⁸

in the shaded Vale of Peace section to serve as a resting place for her dear friend and mentor.⁴¹



Student body and instructors outside at LABI, La Puente, California, ca. 1950s. Alice Luce and Jovita Bonilla (2nd row, left of center).

On August 27, 1963, eight years after Luce's death, Bonilla bought a plot for herself, adjacent to Luce's. Because she and Luce had a relationship much like that of a mother and daughter,⁴² Bonilla felt compelled to select her place of earthly rest next to that of her dear friend.⁴³

Bonilla retired from teaching in about 1966, and her ministerial status changed from "Instructor" to "Minister." She retired from ministry in 1973, due to health issues.

When Alice Luce had first moved to California, she bought property in Inglewood, where she was living when Bonilla came to stay with her. In 1949, they moved to 1341 Carroll Avenue, Los Angeles, where Luce had a modest home constructed. When Luce died in 1955, she left all of her earthly possessions to Bonilla.⁴⁴

After Luce's passing, Bonilla continued to live at the Carroll Avenue address. When Bonilla died on February 18, 1988, in accordance with her wishes, her estate was liquidated and the funds were donated to LABI.⁴⁵ This bequest was an extension of Luce's love and dedication, through the person of Bonilla, as well

as a gift of love from Bonilla herself. LABI named its chapel after Luce, and another building after Bonilla, in honor of their generosity.⁴⁶

For more than 35 years, Jovita Tomasa Bonilla served as Luce's secretary, an instructor at LABI, and Dean of Women at that institution. Her peers and students alike recognized her devotion to ministry and her love for them.

A memorial in the LABI yearbook noted that Bonilla "was known as a devoted, responsible, meticulous, and frugal servant of Christ."⁴⁷ She gave herself in an unselfish manner to promote LABI and its purpose of preparing the Hispanic leaders for service to their community. In formal and informal settings, Bonilla would present "to her students the vast need for God in the lives of the Mexicans, creating within each student a greater desire to be better equipped for his [or her] future ministry."⁴⁸

Bonilla, like Luce, had a deep passion for her people; she was a soul-winner, as was her mentor. Personal mentoring is one of the most effective methods of leadership development. Luce was a "mentor-extraordinaire,"

and Jovita Bonilla carried on this mentoring ministry, developing leaders until she, too, passed the torch on to the next generation of Hispanic mentors.

Dr. Florence Murcutt and Jovita Bonilla, both mentored by leading missiologist and educator Alice E. Luce, helped to lay the foundation for the growth of the Assemblies of God in Latin America and in the Hispanic community in the United States. All three women were immigrants; Luce and Murcutt were of British extraction, while Bonilla was Mexican. Yet they worked side by side to spread the gospel, building a strong indigenous group of Hispanic believers that, increasingly, is providing leadership for the broader Pentecostal movement.✝



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NOTES

¹Victor DeLeon, *The Silent Pentecostals* (La Habra, CA: the author, 1979), v.

²Mikeuel E. Peterson, "'Led by the Holy Spirit': The Missionary Career, Leadership, Thought, and Influence of Alice Eveline Luce," D.Miss. Dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2009.

³"1918 Register of Alumnae," *Woman's Bulletin of the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania Medical College of Pennsylvania*, section 1, 19. According to the *Faculty Meeting Minutes* in April 1907, Florence Josephine Murcutt did not pass her examinations in Obstetrics and Surgery, so she did not graduate with the rest of her class (*Minutes*, 188). By October 1907, she had petitioned to retake those exams and passed, receiving her medical degree (*Minutes*, 204).

⁴1910 United States Census, 2nd Ward, Santa Monica Township, Los Angeles County, California, dwelling 404, National Archives Microfilm Roll 87, 131.

⁵Stanley H. Frodsham, *With Signs Following* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1941), 231.

⁶Jenny Kidd Gowanlock Trout (1841-1921) was the first Canadian woman to earn her medical degree at the WMCP. At age 41, Jenny Trout took an early retirement from her medical practice, the Medical and Electro-Therapeutic Institute, in Toronto. In 1908, she and her family moved to Hollywood, California, where she became friends with Murcutt, because they were both medical doctors and Christians. See: Peter E. Paul Dembski, "Gowanlock, Jenny Kidd (Trout)" in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Ramsay Cook, ed., vol. 15 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005), 427-428.

⁷A. A. Boddy, "Jerusalem: Distributing the Gospels," *Confidence*, February 1913, 39-41; and "Dr. Florence Murcutt," *Weekly Evangel*, October 21, 1916, 13.

⁸Frodsham, 231-232.

⁹Florence J. Murcutt, "A Sign to Them that Believe Not," *Pentecostal Evangel*, November 27, 1926, 3.

¹⁰Florence J. Murcutt, "A Retrospect of the Lord's Leadings," *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 30, 1932, 7, 9; 1910 United States Census, 2nd Ward, Santa Monica Township, Los Angeles County, California, dwelling 404, National Archives Microfilm Roll 87, 131.

¹¹Murcutt, "A Retrospect of the Lord's Leadings," 7, 9.

¹²Boddy, 39-41; and Florence J. Murcutt,

"Gospel Seed Sowing in Palestine," *Weekly Evangel*, November 11, 1916, 4-5, 9.

¹³"The London Missionary Home," *Latter Rain Evangel*, September 1922, 17.

¹⁴DeLeon, 20.

¹⁵"The London Missionary Home," 17.

¹⁶Murcutt, "A Retrospect of the Lord's Leadings," 7, 9.

¹⁷"The London Missionary Home," 17.

¹⁸Florence J. Murcutt, "A Few Words from Outgoing Missionaries," *Weekly Evangel*, October 13, 1917, 11.

¹⁹Alice E. Luce and Florence J. Murcutt, ministerial files, FPHC.

²⁰Hispanic educator Luisa Jeter de Walker stated that Luce was the *first* AG missionary to Mexico. Luisa Jeter de Walker, *Siembra y Cosecha: Las Asambleas de Dios de México y Centroamérica*, tomo 1 (Deerfield, FL: Editorial Vida, 1990), 17. But subsequent research shows that Luce was, in fact, the *second*, having been preceded by Loreto Garza, who went to Mexico in February or March of 1917, some six months before Luce and her missionary team. Alice E. Luce, "Open Doors in Mexico," *Weekly Evangel*, November 17, 1917, 12. See: Loreto Garza, ministerial file, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

²¹Alice E. Luce, "Mexican Work in California," *Weekly Evangel*, April 20, 1918, 11.

²²1920 United States Census, Long Beach Township, Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California, dwelling 9, National Archives Microfilm Roll 104, 303.

²³Everett A. Wilson and Ruth Marshall Wilson, "Alice E. Luce: A Visionary Victorian" in *Portraits of a Generation: Early Pentecostal Leaders*, James R. Goff, Jr. and Grant Wacker, eds. (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 169.

²⁴Florence Murcutt, "Giving to God What is Due," *Pentecostal Evangel*, December 9, 1922, 7.

²⁵Everett A. Wilson and Ruth Marshall Wilson, 170.

²⁶Everett A. Wilson and Darlene Little, eds., *Glad Tidings Bible Institute, Bethany Bible College: A Narrative and Pictorial History* (Scotts Valley, CA: Bethany College, 1994), 58.

²⁷Stanley Frodsham, "With the Lord," *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 4, 1936, 7.

²⁸For Elbethel Christian Work's tenets of faith, see: *Elbethel*, July-Sept., 1971, 60. Cora Harris MacIlravy founded Elbethel in 1912 as a "society for the deepening of spiritual life."

The periodical began publication in 1914, and a training center later emerged to offer theological and practical ministry experience to students. See: Charles E. Jones, *A Guide to the Study of the Pentecostal Movement* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1983), 558.

²⁹Jovita Bonilla, letter to J. Roswell Flower, December 29, 1939, FPHC.

³⁰Alice E. Luce, letter to J. Roswell Flower, December 18, 1939, FPHC.

³¹Jovita Bonilla, ministerial file, FPHC.

³²*Ebenezer* (La Puente, CA: LABI, 1952), 2.

³³Catalina C. Monrada, interview by Mikeuel E. Peterson, June 15, 2003. Monrado graduated from LABI in 1936.

³⁴*The Cup* (Springfield, MO: Central Bible Institute), 1946.

³⁵During Jovita Bonilla's tenure in Springfield, Missouri, her ministerial classification changed from "Evangelist-Teacher" to "Home Missionary." When she returned to LABI, it changed to "Teacher" Jovita Bonilla, ministerial file, FPHC.

³⁶A. Adele Flower, "Literature for Our Latin Neighbors," *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 14, 1951, 8.

³⁷Alice E. Luce, certificate of registration, *His Britannic Majesty's Consulate*, San Francisco, California, October 6, 1921.

³⁸Alice E. Luce, certificate of citizenship, Los Angeles, California, January 10, 1930.

³⁹Jovita Bonilla, certificate of citizenship, San Diego, California, September 24, 1937.

⁴⁰*Latin American Bible Institute Catalog*, 1958-1959, 6.

⁴¹Alice E. Luce, "Application and agreement," Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Hollywood Hills, California, September 21, 1955.

⁴²Alice Luce was 29 years older than Jovita Bonilla.

⁴³Jovita Bonilla, "Application and agreement," Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Hollywood Hills, California, August 27, 1963.

⁴⁴Alice E. Luce, last will and testament, May 9, 1955, FPHC.

⁴⁵Jovita Bonilla, last will and testament, Los Angeles, California, January 15, 1986, 2.

⁴⁶"In memory of Jovita Bonilla:[1902]-1988," *Ebenezer* (La Puente, CA: Latin American Bible Institute), 1989, 3.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸*The Cup* (Springfield, MO: Central Bible Institute), 1947, 28.



Mark 16:15-18; Matt. 28:19-20; Matt. 9:38

MR. and MRS.
D. and O. SAPLISHNY
Missionary to Bulgaria

Home Address
9 Waverly Place, Stamford, Conn. U.S.A.

Foreign Address
Antime I, No. 37 Burgas, Bulgaria
1929

Dionissy and Olga Zaplishny: American Slavic Apostles to the Bulgarians

By Svetlana Renee Papazov

Much has been written about the prominent “apostle to the Slavs,”¹ Ivan Voronaev, while not much is known about the European missionary work of Dionissy and Olga Zaplishny. Yet the Zaplishnys have an impressive legacy, and their ministry endeavors were entwined with Voronaev’s on several occasions. Growing up in Bulgaria, I often heard my family and other believers lovingly mention the Zaplishnys, who played a foundational role in establishing the Pentecostal movement in my native land. This article is a tribute to their faithful legacy.

A Woman Preacher Plays a Major Role in the Pentecostal Renewal Among the Slavs

In my vision, I saw a man with fair complexion, but handsome, with a laurel crown resting on his head. I knew that the laurel crown was a sign of a short life. Yet, in my inner being, I was convinced that he was the one I would meet and marry someday... I was surprised beyond description when I got off the train and ready to preach, scanning the crowd for the person that was sent to greet the guest speaker: My welcoming committee comprised of one eligible, young bachelor pastor, with fair complexion and handsome — the face from my vision had become a reality!² — *Olga Popova Zaplishny*

Olga Zaplishny’s life had a suspense-book storyline that could rival the plots of many novelists. But more importantly, her life left a legacy that truly counts — one that added to the impact prominent women had on shaping the Pentecostal movement throughout the last couple of centuries.

Pentecostalism, by the middle of the twentieth century, had more women preachers than any other branch of Christianity. Allowing women to preach was a Pentecostal

practice that varied from the norm of other churches. These Spirit-filled believers based their actions on the prophecy in Joel 2:28: “Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.”³

The preacher, Olga Zaplishny, lived a life that was Spirit-breathed, church-forming, culture-altering, and generation-impacting.⁴ Her devotion to God began in her early childhood. Olga was born on May 31, 1887, in the seaport city of

Olga Zaplishny’s life had a suspense-book storyline that could rival the plots of many novelists.

Bourgas (also spelled Burgas), Bulgaria, to the wealthy family of Stefan and Marta Popov. Her family had deep roots in the Orthodox faith,⁵ and was revered by many, because of the sacrificial life that Olga’s grandfather, George Stoyanov, lived as a renowned Orthodox priest and a martyr.⁶

Although Olga had heard of God because of her upbringing, she was unfamiliar with the salvation message. One day, at the age of nine,⁷ as she was headed to the beach, Olga’s plans were interrupted, which yielded an eternal consequence. She was attracted by the sound of children’s singing coming from a two-story house. The young girl’s curiosity led her inside. In the sovereign plan of God, she “stumbled upon” the Congregational church in Bourgass where a pastor was holding a children’s meeting. Olga sat in the back and for the first time heard the gospel clearly explained to her. Weeping, she accepted Christ as her personal Savior. Consequently, she brought her two sisters and mother to the Lord, although her father was greatly opposed to this new-found religion.⁸

Olga grew up to be an attractive, well-known young woman in the Bourgass society.⁹ She went to a private



Olga Kalkanjeva with her first husband, Peter, 1911.

American school in Samokov, Bulgaria, and then continued her college education at Robert College in Constantinople (now Istanbul), Turkey. After college, she married and went to study pharmacy in Switzerland.¹⁰ Her husband, Peter Kalkandjiev, died during World War I as a paramedic in the army, leaving her with a young daughter.¹¹ Olga felt that even though she had lost her husband, God was setting her free to pursue her calling to spread the gospel. Knowing that her in-laws would object to her leaving the country, Olga secretly boarded a ship and sailed to America.¹² The young widow was fluent in English, Bulgarian, Turkish, French, Greek, and Russian.¹³ God uniquely had begun to prepare Olga for the missionary task ahead.

Olga and her daughter Vasilka arrived in the United States in 1914. Olga found herself in a new country with very few friends and very little money.¹⁴ She desired to attend a Bible school. Following the recommendation of friends, she attended A. F. Schaufler's Training School

for Christian Workers, an evangelical institution in Gramercy Park, New York City. She also visited Bethel Bible Training School, an independent Pentecostal school in Newark, New Jersey.¹⁵

Olga heard the Pentecostal message for the first time at Bethel. A veteran missionary to China, W. W. Simpson, laid hands on her, and she was filled with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.¹⁶ Olga then returned to New York City and immediately started witnessing, conducting house prayer meetings among the Slavic people.¹⁷ Full of the Holy Spirit, this young female preacher¹⁸ helped pioneer two Pentecostal churches in New York City — one Russian and one Ukrainian.¹⁹

While in New York City, friends introduced Olga to the family of Ivan Voronaev — a Baptist pastor. It is reported that she would often spend hours, well into the night,²⁰ discussing with Voronaev the topic of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.²¹ These discussions aided Voronaev's understanding of the tongues-attested baptism, but he

was not fully convinced of the reality of the experience until his own daughter began to speak in unknown languages while attending a service at Glad Tidings Tabernacle, the large Assemblies of God (AG) congregation in New York City. Voronaev began to seek and received the Pentecostal gift himself; he left the Baptists to establish the first Russian Pentecostal church in New York City.²²

Olga Zaplishny's ministry bears a resemblance to the work of Phoebe Palmer — one of the most influential personalities in American church history. In 1839 Palmer started Tuesday evening meetings at her home, where she created the altar terminology, and encouraged people to accept sanctification by faith as a crisis event during which God would instantaneously send fire from heaven and burn out their sin.²³ Almost a century later, Olga started home meetings with the purpose of stirring hunger for God, and for believers to experience the baptizing fire of the Holy Spirit.

The Tale of Two Dreams

In 1919 Olga began to desire the warmth of family life again. She started praying for God's guidance in choosing a husband, and God gave her a literal vision of her future spouse. At the same time a bachelor in Stamford, Connecticut, also was seeking the Lord for a wife, and God showed him the face of the woman he would marry. That young bachelor was Dionissy Zaplishny.²⁴

Zaplishny, a native of Ukraine, was born in Pogachovka, near Kiev, on October 3, 1888. From early childhood, Dionissy felt drawn to serve God, and with boyish curiosity followed the rituals performed by the village Orthodox priest.²⁵ He immigrated to the United States in 1914. An avid student of the Bible, Dionissy enrolled

in a Baptist Bible school.²⁶ At first he was unsympathetic to those speaking in tongues, but not long after he heard the Pentecostal message, he was baptized with the Spirit.

In 1918 Dionissy established a Pentecostal church in Stamford, Connecticut.²⁷ At this church, two God-inspired dreams would become a reality — Olga’s and Dionissy’s. Some of Zaplishny’s congregants had heard of the Bulgarian woman preacher working among the Slavs in New York City. They urged him to have her preach at his church.²⁸ In 1920 Olga received an invitation to speak at his church in Stamford, Connecticut.²⁹ Zaplishny went to meet her at the train station. As she came off the train, both recognized each other from the visions God had given them.

Shortly after meeting they married at Glad Tidings Tabernacle where Pastor Robert Brown officiated. At their wedding reception a prophecy came forth that the Lord had prepared a missionary work for them in Manchuria.³⁰ A few months earlier, in 1919,³¹ at a cottage prayer meeting, Voronaev also had received a prophet-



The Zaplishny family, 1934. (L-r): Mary, Joseph, John, Olga, Dionissy, and Martha.

ic message calling him to return to his motherland, Russia.³² In response to the activity of the Holy Spirit drawing believers to the mission field, several families committed to journey as missionaries to Russia: Ivan Voronaev, Dionissy Zaplishny, V. R. Koltovich, V. Klikibik and N. Kardanov.

Voronaev contacted the Foreign Missions Department of the AG and

received appointment as an AG missionary.³³ In a subsequent contact, through a letter to J. Roswell Flower dated June 22, 1920, Voronaev outlined his strategy to return to Russia and said that he was not leaving alone, but with his family and “some brothers.”³⁴ Three months later, on July 13, 1920, the group sailed on the steamship *Madonna*.³⁵ The missionaries were detained in Constantinople, lacking correct travel documents to enter Russia. One of Zaplishny’s daughters later recalled that, while waiting in Turkey, “the Lord clearly spoke to them” and directed the family to go to Bulgaria instead of Manchuria. They obeyed and made their way to Bourgas, Bulgaria.³⁶

Pentecost Arrives in Bulgaria

At the time the Zaplishnys arrived in Bulgaria, the Pentecostal message had not yet reached the southeastern parts of the European continent.³⁷ Immediately upon arrival, the Zaplishnys began witnessing to their family and friends, telling them about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. People



The home of Maria Nikoloff Ikomopisov (sister of Olga) where the Pentecostal movement began in Bulgaria. Pictured are: Maria, grandson Paul Nikoloff, and Maria’s husband, Georgi.

began converting to the Pentecostal faith and desiring the Pentecostal gift.³⁸ The Congregational church in Bourgas warmly accepted the American Slavs and allowed Dionissy Zaplishny to preach his first Pentecostal sermon from the Congregational church's pulpit.³⁹ Thus, shortly after the Zaplishnys' coming, a nucleus of Pentecostal believers began to form in Bourgas.⁴⁰

The Zaplishnys rented a home in Bourgas which became the meeting place of the first Pentecostal church in Bulgaria. Later, that church became one of the largest Pentecostal churches in the country, and many prominent Pentecostal leaders came from the ranks of its congregation.

Dionissy and Olga Zaplishny worked relentlessly to strengthen the church. This humble couple did not want any praise to go to them. Olga often said that all the praise belonged to God,⁴¹ and they would not deter people from focusing their gratitude on the Giver of all good things.

The couple relied entirely on the empowering work of the Holy Spirit and gave exclusive glory to Him, as the Pentecostal faith went forth. Olga, known for her spiritual discipline, fasted four days each week. She always fasted on Wednesday, starting in 1914 until her death at the age of 94.⁴² The small salary the church was able to pay the Zaplishnys went first to cover tithes, then feed the family, and the rest was donated to the poor and the disadvantaged.⁴³

Voronaev and Zaplishny — Two Partners, One Pentecostal Outreach

Meanwhile the Voronaev family continued to encounter visa difficulties in Turkey. They remained in Constantinople for approximately three months.⁴⁴ While there, Ivan Voronaev began prayer meet-

ings with Russians who had fled the Bolshevik Revolution. Voronaev also encountered some Sabbatarian Pentecostals who practiced footwashing at the observance of the Lord's Supper. Voronaev liked the practice and brought it to Bulgaria and then to Russia. That practice became a prominent identity marker in certain Eastern European Pentecostal denominations. The Union of Evangelical Pentecostal Churches [the Bulgarian Assemblies



Dionissy Zaplishny, circa 1930.

of God] does not observe footwashing, while the various Church of God groups (Church of God [Cleveland, TN], Church of God of Prophecy, United Churches of God, etc.) do observe the practice.⁴⁵

Voronaev let Zaplishny know that his family continued to experience difficulties with the Turkish authorities, because of his preaching of the gospel and their lack of proper visas.⁴⁶ Zaplishny, concerned

that Voronaev could not continue the trip to Russia, invited his missionary friends to enter Bulgaria and to try to enter Russia from there.⁴⁷ Voronaev accepted, and his family, accompanied by Koltovich, joined the Zaplishnys in the Pentecostal missionary work, together evangelizing additional cities in Bulgaria.⁴⁸

Voronaev's family remained in Bulgaria for approximately seven months, when finally they received proper visas to enter Russia. During their stay in Bulgaria, Ivan Voronaev actively worked in spreading the Pentecostal message, convincing his listeners that Spirit baptism, accompanied by speaking in tongues, is for today.⁴⁹ His work was especially fruitful in the interior of the country.⁵⁰

Voronaev was the only person in the group who held credentials with the U.S. AG. Because he held credentials and received support from U.S. churches, he sent regular reports to the AG Division of Foreign Missions. In numerous letters published in the *Pentecostal Evangel*, Voronaev reported success in cities across Bulgaria. He observed that many of the new Pentecostals came from the ranks of the local Protestant churches.⁵¹

Curiously, Voronaev's correspondence did not mention the role of his hosts, the Zaplishnys, in spreading the Pentecostal message in Bulgaria.⁵² One can assume that Voronaev needed an interpreter to preach the gospel, as the Russian language is not freely understood by the Bulgarians, although both are Slavic languages. Olga Zaplishny, the native, and Dionissy Zaplishny, fluent in Bulgarian,⁵³ most likely helped Voronaev with the language, culture and relational connections.

Voronaev's initial evangelization efforts were done in conjunction with the Zaplishnys, yet he never refers to them. In his letters, Voronaev cites several cities that he had evangelized,



Dionissy and Olga Zaplishny (seated in the middle) with their first Pentecostal converts in Bourgas, Bulgaria, 1920.

such as Sliven, Bourgas, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, and Kazanlak, and states that over thirty people were baptized with the Holy Spirit in Bourgas. Zaplishny, as the pioneering pastor of the Pentecostal church in Bourgas, was probably present and active at that event, even though Voronaev did not mention him.⁵⁴

Whatever the reason for silence, one fact remains clear — the Pentecostal message had reached Bulgaria through the dedicated work of the Zaplishnys and Voronaev and had found fertile soil in the hearts of the natives. On August, 21, 1921, Voronaev received the long-awaited visa and departed for Russia.⁵⁵ The two co-laborers, Zaplishny and Voronaev, parted ways never to meet again on this side of heaven.⁵⁶ Voronaev went on to organize over 350 Pentecostal churches in Ukraine and Russia, until Soviet authorities arrested him in 1930 and sent him to Siberia. He never returned from there, ultimately becoming a martyr for the cause of the gospel.⁵⁷

The Zaplishnys continued their call

to minister in Olga's native land and also welcomed their first child, John, born in 1920.⁵⁸ In September 1923, political unrest broke out, and the months to follow brought persecution in Bulgaria.⁵⁹ After four years of missionary work, Dionissy was detained and tortured while in a remote village in the Balkan Mountains. His daughter, Martha, who spent her life researching the family's legacy, recounted the following oral history:

Dionissy's fanatical captors, under the influence of the local Orthodox Church, demanded that he stop propagating what they deemed to be a cult. His twelve captors, who for some reason tried to impersonate the twelve apostles, gave him an ultimatum — cease preaching the "Pentecostal heresy" and he would be free to go. They starved him, beat him daily with sandbags and also doused him with cold water so that he would not bear the evidence of the beatings. Dionissy refused to give up his call to preach. After seven days,

he realized that he was near death. He suggested that he would no longer be a threat if they threw him out of the country. The ruffians, not wanting to be responsible for Dionissy's death, agreed and took him over the border and left him in Yugoslavia.⁶⁰

Dionissy did not use his American citizenship to seek favors or retribution.⁶¹ The severe torture experienced by this young missionary affected his health for the rest of his life.⁶²

Broken in body and saddened, the whole family left Bulgaria and returned to Stamford, Connecticut.⁶³ The newly-founded Pentecostal church in Bourgas lost its pastor and the burgeoning Bulgarian Pentecostal movement its leader. Yet the Pentecostal message continued to go forth, and many budding churches in small villages and cities continued to mature in the faith.⁶⁴

The Zaplishnys' Influence on Slavs in Europe and America

The year 1924 was not entirely grievous for the Zaplishny family. Shortly after their October return to the U.S., Dionissy and Olga welcomed their second child, Mary. Immediately upon his return, Dionissy resumed his ministry as an evangelist among the Slavs in America, despite still being physically weak.⁶⁵ The young pastor traveled extensively throughout the United States, even as he prayed for the door to Bulgaria to reopen.⁶⁶ Slavic-American Pentecostal leader Fred Smolchuck recalled, "Zaplishny had a charisma that attracted people and inspired them to serve the Lord. Congregations were eager to hear what he had to say. He was very interesting and the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon his ministry was quite apparent."⁶⁷

Zaplishny became an ordained pastor with the AG on February 28, 1926.⁶⁸ Zaplishny, highly regarded among his peers, was elected in 1927 to serve as the chairman of the Pentecostal Union of the Assemblies of God (an interdenominational Slavic organization of about 22 churches which, despite its name, was not officially a part of the AG). In that role, he encouraged Slavic Pentecostals to form their own ethnic congregations in order to better minister to fellow Slavs in their native tongues. In his history of Slavic-American Pentecostalism, Smolchuck wrote, “Dionissy Zaplishny’s faithfulness and enthusiasm to preach the Gospel to the Slavic people in North America shall not be forgotten.”⁶⁹ During that period, two more children were added to the Zaplishny’s household — Martha in 1926, and Joseph in 1929.

Early in 1930, while actively serving the Pentecostal Union of the Assemblies of God, Zaplishny felt led of the Holy Spirit to return to Bulgaria.⁷⁰ Zaplishny, now credentialed as an AG minister, set out with his family on an overseas trip to continue the pioneering work they had started ten years earlier. Unfortunately, since they had left in 1924, the Bulgarian Pentecostal movement experienced division, including over doctrine.

Olga’s nephew, Nicholas Nikoloff, set out to stabilize, organize, and officially register the Pentecostal church in Bulgaria. In 1928, Nikoloff became the first general superintendant of the officially registered Union of Evangelical Pentecostal Churches. Nikoloff left Bulgaria in 1931 to continue his education in the United States,⁷¹ and Paul Rahneff succeeded him as the next general superintendant.⁷² Nikoloff and Rahneff ministered not only in Bulgaria, but also significantly contributed to the American AG.

God called Zaplishny back to

Bulgaria at that crucial period when the Union of Evangelical Pentecostal Churches was being established. Zaplishny helped to strengthen the Union and again took the pastorate of the Pentecostal church in Bourgas, together with Nikoloff’s brother, Veselin.⁷³ Dionissy and Olga

“Zaplishny had a charisma that attracted people and inspired them to serve the Lord.”
— Fred Smolchuck

Zaplishny often traveled throughout the country, evangelizing and encouraging believers.⁷⁴ Olga, a deaconess in the Bourgas church, ministered to women,⁷⁵ hosted visiting pastors and believers at her home, and filled in for her husband when he went evangelizing.⁷⁶

Zaplishny poured his heart into pioneering and strengthening the Pentecostal movement among Slavs on two continents. The Pentecostal fire spread swiftly in Bulgaria and, by 1935, there were at least 5,000 Pentecostal believers in the country.⁷⁷ But ministry in Bulgaria had its price.⁷⁸ Dionissy began to feel tired and had to preach while sitting down. Ultimately, he was confined to his bed with a form of Hodgkin’s disease. He passed away at his home at the age of 46, on January 12, 1935. Olga Zaplishny stayed in Bulgaria to strengthen the church. She was given permission to leave Bulgaria, just four months before another wave of religious persecution by the communists. She arrived in the United States on Christmas Eve 1947 and spent the next 34 years living with

her daughters, Martha Jackson (South Attleboro, Massachusetts) and Mary Waltke (Wallkill, New York). Olga spent much of her time during those years passing out tracts, witnessing, fasting, and praying. Olga Zaplishny passed away on January 10, 1982, at the age of 94.⁷⁹

Conclusion

Dionissy and Olga Zaplishny deserve the Church’s deepest gratitude, for they plowed the missionary field in Bulgaria, seeking to bring God’s Kingdom and His Spirit’s empowerment to all believers. The sacrificial work of the Zaplishnys has been etched into the Pentecostal fabric of the Slavic church, in Bulgaria, America and beyond. Their legacy demonstrates how God can work through consecrated lives to reach people at home and abroad. ✠



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father, Tenio Tanev, served on the executive presbytery of the Union of Evangelical Pentecostal Churches [the Bulgarian Assemblies of God], pastored several churches and in his retirement became a church planter among the gypsies in Bulgaria, pioneering 27 churches among them. Her husband’s late grandfather, Angel Dinov, was the general superintendant of the Union of Evangelical Pentecostal Churches for 30 years.

NOTES

¹Vinson Synan, *An Eyewitness Remembers the Century of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Chosen, 2010), 180. For the most complete English-language account of Voronaev’s life, see: Dony K. Donev, “Ivan Voronaev: Slavic

Pentecostal Pioneer and Martyr,” *Assemblies of God Heritage* 30 (2010): 50-57, 69-70. This article relies primarily upon oral history and secondary accounts of the Zaplishnys’ ministry. It is possible that sources located in Bulgaria would yield additional valuable information.

²Martha Zaplishny Jackson, telephone interview, March 2010.

³Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 190.

⁴Todor Sabev, *Parvata Evangeliska Petdesiatna Zarkva v Burgas: Bez Krast Niama Korona* (Burgas: Duhoven Savet pri EPZ, 1999), 9. This history of First Evangelical Pentecostal Church in Bourgas and the broader Pentecostal movement in Bulgaria was written by a deacon of the church.

⁵Martha C. Zaplishny Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” typewritten, n.d., 1. FPHC.

⁶Sabev, *Parvata Evangeliska Petdesiatna Zarkva v Burgas*, 8.

⁷“Pioneer of Bulgarian Churches with Christ,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, March 28, 1982, 24.

⁸Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 1.

⁹Sabev, *Parvata Evangeliska Petdesiatna Zarkva v Burgas*, 8.

¹⁰Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 1.

¹¹Daughter Mary Zaplishny Waltke’s letter to Fred Smolchuck, October 31, 1988, FPHC.

¹²Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 1.

¹³Sabev, *Parvata Evangeliska Petdesiatna Zarkva v Burgas*, 8.

¹⁴Fred Smolchuck, *From Azusa Street to the USSR: A Brief History of Pentecost Among Slavic Immigrants 1900-1991* (Arcadia, CA: North American Slavic Pentecostal Fellowship, 1992), 19.

¹⁵Waltke letter.

¹⁶Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 2.

¹⁷Smolchuck, 19.

¹⁸Todor Sabev, *77 Godini. Kalnove i Rastej na Petdesiatmoto Dvijeni* (Burgas: EPZ, 1997), 3. This is a small pamphlet about the beginning of Pentecostalism in Bourgas.

¹⁹“Pioneer of Bulgarian Churches with Christ,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, March 28, 1982, 24.

²⁰Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 2.

²¹Smolchuck, 19.

²²Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*,

139.

²³*Ibid.*, 32.

²⁴Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 2.

²⁵Sabev, *Parvata Evangeliska Petdesiatna Zarkva v Burgas*, 8.

²⁶Smolchuck, 19.

²⁷Waltke letter.

²⁸Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 2.

²⁹Smolchuck, 19.

³⁰Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 2.

³¹Donev, “Ivan Voronaev,” 52-53.

³²Smolchuck, 4.

³³Donev, “Ivan Voronaev,” 53.

³⁴John E. Varonaeff, letter to J. Roswell Flower, June 22, 1920. FPHC.

³⁵Reports differ on the date of departure. A 1939 chronology of Voronaev’s life dates the departure on July 13. See Voronaev, missionary file, FPHC. Martha Jackson reported a July 17 departure. See Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 2.

³⁶Smolchuck, 20; Waltke letter.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸Smolchuck, 20.

³⁹Sabev, *Parvata Evangeliska Petdesiatna Zarkva v Burgas*, 11.

⁴⁰Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 2.

⁴¹Jackson, telephone interview, March 2010.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³Sabev, *Parvata Evangeliska Petdesiatna Zarkva v Burgas*, 11.

⁴⁴Donev, “Ivan Voronaev,” 53.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶Sabev, *Parvata Evangeliska Petdesiatna Zarkva v Burgas*, 12. Sabev uses the former Bulgarian Pentecostal Union General Superintendent Ivan Zarev’s work: *Istoria na EPZ v Bulgaria 1920-1989*. 1993.

⁴⁷Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 3.

⁴⁸Donev, “Ivan Voronaev,” 53.

⁴⁹Sabev, *Parvata Evangeliska Petdesiatna Zarkva v Burgas*, 12.

⁵⁰Sabev, *77 Godini*, 4.

⁵¹For Voronaev’s revival reports from Bulgaria, see: *Pentecostal Evangel*, March 5, 1921, 12; *Pentecostal Evangel*, April 16, 1921, 13; *Pentecostal Evangel*, May 14, 1921, 12; *Pentecostal Evangel*, June 11, 1921, 13; *Latter Rain Evangel*, July 1921, 15.

⁵²Dony K. Donev, “Pisma ot Bulgaria 1920

(chast 3),” *Blagovestitel*, 2008, 31.

⁵³Smolchuck, 20.

⁵⁴Jackson, telephone interview, March 2010. Descendants of the Zaplishnys rightly question why Voronaev did not mention Dionissy and Olga in his correspondence, since most other available sources point to the Zaplishnys’ active involvement in the missionary work during that period.

⁵⁵Dony K. Donev, “Pisma ot Bulgaria: Korespondenziata na Ivan E. Voronaev (obzor),” *Blagovestitel*, broi 2, 2009, 34.

⁵⁶Sabev, *77 Godini*, 4.

⁵⁷Smolchuck, 4.

⁵⁸Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 3.

⁵⁹Waltke letter.

⁶⁰Martha Zaplishny Jackson, telephone interview, December 2010. Brief accounts of the torture are also found in: Smolchuck, 20; and Sabev, *77 Godini*, 4.

⁶¹Sabev, *Parvata Evangeliska Petdesiatna Zarkva v Burgas*, 14.

⁶²Jackson, telephone interview, March 2010. Olga told her children that Dionissy Zaplishny never completely recovered from being tortured.

⁶³Waltke letter.

⁶⁴Sabev, *Parvata Evangeliska Petdesiatna Zarkva v Burgas*, 14-15.

⁶⁵Smolchuck, 20.

⁶⁶Waltke letter.

⁶⁷Smolchuck, 20.

⁶⁸Dionissy Zaplishny, ordination certificate, February 28, 1926.

⁶⁹Smolchuck, 20.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 20 -21.

⁷¹Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 3.

⁷²Dimitar Mitev, “Zavetat na Predzite – Istoricheski Pouki za Badeshteto,” *Blagovestitel*, broi 3, 2008, 14.

⁷³Sabev, *Parvata Evangeliska Petdesiatna Zarkva v Burgas*, 24.

⁷⁴Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 3.

⁷⁵Sabev, *Parvata Evangeliska Petdesiatna Zarkva v Burgas*, 24.

⁷⁶Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 3.

⁷⁷Smolchuck, 4.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 20.

⁷⁹Jackson, “Detailed Historical Postscript,” 3-4; “Pioneer of Bulgarian Churches with Christ,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, March 28, 1982, 24.



Nile Mother: Lillian Trasher and Egypt's Orphans

By Beth Baron

I was a young, happy girl [in 1910] of not quite 23, full of dreams of all the wonderful things I was sure life held for me. The most important of all was the 12 children I was hoping for. I wonder what I would have felt like had the curtain been lifted for just a few minutes and I could have seen myself this morning, 50 years later! Here I am — a tired, old gray-headed woman, looking out my window and seeing not 12 children but 1,200!

— Lillian Trasher, January 4, 1960¹

One hundred years ago, in 1911, Lillian Hunt Trasher started what would become the largest orphanage in Egypt. Trasher, a single Christian woman, successfully navigated complex cultural and social currents in this largely-Muslim country, and her Assiout Orphanage survived political turmoil and war. Although she did not have children of her own, she became known as the “Nile Mother,” raising thousands of orphans in the home.

Trasher is probably the most recognized missionary in the Assemblies of God. Her supporters followed her story through her letters to Pentecostal periodicals, features in magazines, biographies, and a movie (“The Nile Mother”).² These works frame her life and the success of her mission as an affirmation of the Christian faith.³ Trasher supporters in the West may be less familiar with her interaction with Egyptian political and social elites and her impact on Egyptian society. This article provides a brief overview of Trasher’s childhood and call to the mission field, as well as a more thorough examination of her life and work in the context of colonial and postcolonial Egypt.

Childhood, Conversion and Call

Lillian Trasher was born on September 27, 1887, in Jacksonville, Florida.⁴ Her father was manager of an asphalt paving company, and her mother was educated at Vassar College.⁵ Lillian spent much of her childhood in Brunswick, Georgia, where neighbors Ed and Anna Mason awakened in

Lillian a hunger for religion during the Christmas season in 1896.⁶

Biographer Beth Prim Howell recounted a story Lillian told about an experience as a nine-year-old. One day Lillian was walking home from school when she knelt before an old log, as if it were an altar, and cried out loud, “I want to be your little girl.” She later said that she prayed alone for some time in the piney woods and finally declared boldly, “Lord, if ever I can do anything for You, just let me know and — and — I’ll do it!”⁷

During her teenage years, Lillian grew into an attractive young woman and also developed a remarkable artistic talent. At age 16, Lillian and her family moved to Asheville, North Carolina. One day, while at a train station on her way to visit the Masons in her hometown, she met Mattie Perry — a Pentecostal woman who had started the Elhanan Training Institute and Orphanage in Marion, North Carolina. Perry’s venture was not supported by a denomination, but operated on faith that God would provide for needs as they arose. The course of Lillian’s life changed because of her encounter with Perry. Lillian had intended to apply for a position in the art department at a newspaper in Atlanta, but instead joined the staff at Perry’s orphanage, where she learned to feed and clothe infants and children as well as run a mission on faith-based lines.⁸

Lillian took a break from the orphanage, studying for one year at God’s Bible School, a Holiness institution in

Cincinnati, Ohio. She also was active in ministry in a Church of God congregation in Dahlonega, Georgia, and then traveled as an evangelist.

Back at the orphanage with Perry, Lillian felt called to serve as a missionary to Africa. She was engaged to marry a handsome young minister, Tom Jordan, but he did not share her call to the mission field. She tearfully broke off her engagement and accepted the invitation of a Pentecostal couple, G. S. Brelsford and his wife, to join them in Egypt. Hearing that she did not have the financial backing of a mission board, Lillian's own family initially opposed her plans.⁹ Undeterred, Lillian solicited funds and went out in 1910 accompanied by her sister Jennie to the Nile town of Asyut in southern Egypt.

Arrival in Egypt

Within months of her arrival, Lillian went to pray for a dying young mother. She returned to the Pentecostal mission home with the dead woman's baby, but her hosts soon lost patience with the infant's crying. Rather than give the baby back to its family, which did not have the means to feed it, she kept the child. Unfettered by a board bureaucracy, Lillian rented a home and started an orphanage. She believed that God would provide.

The Assiout Orphanage, which later became affiliated with the Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions, grew into a village that held at its peak 1,400 children and widows and contained its own schools, church, clinic, bakery, dairy, dormitories, and swimming pool. During its first fifty years, roughly eight thousand orphans passed through its doors.¹⁰

Lillian Trasher's orphanage became the centerpiece of Pentecostal missions in Egypt, producing many of its converts, preachers, and leaders. It surpassed in size and longevity most



Lillian Trasher (left) with her sister, Jennie Benton, on board the *S. S. Berlin* as they are leaving for Egypt in 1910.

other foreign missionary projects, and when other missionaries were expelled or prevented from returning at critical moments, Lillian enjoyed a special status.

Presbyterians Prepare the Field

Pentecostal evangelists in Egypt followed in the footsteps of Presbyterians, who arrived in Egypt in 1854 and established a base in Asyut

considered by Presbyterians to be in need of reform and receptive to Protestant "conversion." Indeed, a number of prominent Coptic families in Asyut, most notably the Wissas and Khayatts, became Protestants.

The Presbyterians enjoyed board support and established self-sustaining and money-making operations such as schools and hospitals. The Pentecostals, by contrast, came out "on faith," hoping to raise money from local supporters and those back home; they focused on preaching, prayer, and proselytizing through distributing Bibles, Arabic periodicals, and gospel literature.

The better-educated Presbyterians were elitist and sought out converts from the wealthier classes; the Pentecostals were populists who spent more time with the poor. The groups had very different notions of conversion: Presbyterians focused on learning and indoctrination; Pentecostals stressed a religious experience that included "baptism in the Holy Spirit" and speaking in tongues. The Christian sects also had different notions of gender roles in church and society: the Presbyterians came out as couples in

Lillian Trasher's orphanage became the centerpiece of Pentecostal missions in Egypt, producing many of its converts, preachers, and leaders.

early on.¹¹ The fourth largest city in Egypt, Asyut was the capital of Upper Egypt and a stronghold of Eastern Orthodox Christians, who were con-

the early days; wives often taught or directed Bible women; single women mainly taught. The Pentecostals came out as couples or as singles, but missionary wives and single women could preach should God choose to “use” them in this way.

Lillian Trasher chose the most marginal of people for her ministry: orphaned, abandoned, and handicapped children, who lacked family in a society that considered the family its basis and saw family lineage as critical to creating and sustaining social and political bonds. This helped insure Lillian’s success even when Presbyterians and other missionaries in Egypt began to withdraw.

Winning Local Support and Averting Attacks

When Lillian Trasher arrived in Upper Egypt, preachers were plentiful, but no orphanages existed in Asyut or its environs. She resolved to start one. Children initially did not come flocking to the Malja’ al-Aytam al-Khayri bi-Asyut (shortened in English to the Assiout Orphanage). “Then we took in a few children, but at first it was very hard to get them.”¹² Egyptians suspected that Lillian planned to take the orphans as slaves to America. Given Asyut’s historical role as a major depot in the slave trade, which ended only in 1877, as well as the American history of slavery, the thought was not that strange.¹³

The first year of the orphanage was rocky. After a child entered the home with bubonic plague, authorities closed it down temporarily, and Lillian returned to the U.S. to convalesce. While in Durant, Florida, A. J. Tomlinson of the Church of God gave her ministerial credentials as an evangelist. Upon her return to Egypt, the Assiout Orphanage began to grow.¹⁴ “Every week I have to turn away four or five little ignorant children from

lack of space who might be taught and led to Christ,” Lillian wrote in 1913.¹⁵ By the next year she had fifty children under her care. An unnamed Turkish woman taught rug making, and Sarah Smith, a missionary from Indianapolis, gave Lillian a hand.

With space tight, Lillian decided to move the home out of the city in 1915. She built across the river in Abnub on



Lillian Trasher upon her arrival in Egypt, 1910.

a half acre. With a base on the east side of the river, the orphanage had room to grow. At the same time, the orphans, whose status was often ambiguous, were removed from the center of town and physically marginalized.

Lillian received support from local elites as well as foreign backers, raising funds through Pentecostal periodicals, but the Pentecostals had not picked the most propitious moment to launch their missionary effort in Egypt. They arrived after the founding of the first nationalist parties in 1907 and were oblivious to the growing nationalist and Islamic opposition to British occupation.

During World War I foreign missionaries became targets of anti-impe-

rial dissent. All the Pentecostals, with the exception of Lillian, evacuated Egypt, leaving the nine or ten stations they had built in the hands of “native workers.”¹⁶ Lillian stayed on with her staff, which included Shaker Gadallah and two other Egyptian women. Feeding the children in the midst of a spike in prices that multiplied costs challenged their resourcefulness.

After the May wheat harvest when peasants had money, Lillian rode out to villages on a donkey, soliciting funds and food and staying in police stations along the way.¹⁷ She gained the peasants’ trust along with donations of food and cash.¹⁸ That some had something left over to give to the orphans reflects their willingness to share with the poorest of the poor. Lillian’s meanderings in the Egyptian countryside made her a familiar figure to village mayors, who later wrote to ask her to take in their widows and orphans.

The orphanage doubled its numbers during the war from roughly fifty to one hundred children. To accommodate the new residents, rooms were added in a process that became a pattern for the home. Once the children got older, they participated in the brick-making and laying process. At the end of the war an influenza epidemic added further to the numbers. “We are glad to accept the most needy cases, and have had to enlarge our house, adding four new rooms which are about filled,” wrote Lillian in early 1919.¹⁹

As the war wound down and international peace talks loomed, Egyptian nationalists sought a place at the table, but colonial officials arrested them. Massive protests erupted throughout Egypt; protestors called for the release of their leaders. The British acted quickly to restore order in the capital, where among those protesting were some of Lillian’s staunchest support-

ers, notably Esther Fanus (daughter of Balsam Wissa and Akhtukh Fanus, and wife of Fahmy Wissa).²⁰ In Asyut, events started peacefully but took a violent turn.²¹

An American Presbyterian minister had tried to persuade Lillian before the violence erupted to take refuge with them in one of the schools in

done you any harm. Be ashamed and go somewhere else but to the home of our orphan babies.”²² While many other foreign institutions and businesses were attacked and burned in the revolt, the orphanage was spared.

When British reinforcements arrived in the region, they forced Lillian and the children to evacuate

appointment with the Assemblies of God, beginning her official affiliation with a church that did not exist when she left for Asyut in 1910.²³

Royals, Notables, and Local Egyptians Help Fund the Home

In the wake of the 1919 Revolution, Egyptians started new orphanages, sensing that they needed to care for their own orphans and abandoned children, rather than leave this to foreigners.

Lillian’s refuge had little competition in Asyut, to which she had returned in February 1920. She had more requests for entry than she could accommodate. “You cannot imagine how I feel when I have to refuse some [children entry],” Lillian lamented. “There are no other orphanages within hundreds of miles from here and the other orphanages in Cairo and Alexandria will not take in new ones until some of the older ones leave.”²⁴

Rather than continue to turn down children, Lillian decided to expand the home again. A gift in 1921 of \$1,500 from the then Sultan (later King) Fu’ad (r.1917-1936) helped make this enlargement possible.²⁵ His visit to the orphanage was one in a line of Egyptian rulers and foreign royals and nobles, such as the Queen of Belgium and Lord Maclay of Scotland, who sought to demonstrate their benevolence and enhance their prestige through charitable giving.

In 1926, Lillian Trasher went to the Shari’a Court in Asyut to establish a trust (*waqf*) for the lands and buildings of the Assiout Orphanage. Her strategy deviated from the standard practice of American missionaries, who accumulated property in the name of a board, which then controlled the property. According to the terms of the trust, Lillian could never sell the land but would remain head of the trust



Lillian Trasher with orphans in a Model T, 1928.

Asyut, but she refused to leave the orphanage in Abnub. After communication with Cairo was severed and the banks limited access to funds, Lillian and “Auntie” Zakiya, the head matron, decided to send all of those children with family in Asyut and nearby villages to their relatives. The orphanage subsequently became cut off from town and came under attack by looters.

A neighbor intervened, “Men, be ashamed!” he apparently said. “These are our own orphans, our own Egyptian children for whom the lady has given her life ... and she has never

the orphanage. The boys were moved into one of the American Presbyterian schools in town; the girls and babies were sent to the American Presbyterian Hospital. “Auntie” Zakiya took charge of the children, awaiting permission to return with them to Abnub. British officials forced Lillian to join other foreigners being evacuated to Cairo.

Having been away from her family for seven years, Lillian decided to use the time of her enforced separation from the children to visit the U.S. There, in 1919, she raised funds for the orphanage and she received ministerial credentials and a missionary

as long as she lived. She appointed a committee of interrelated Wissas, Khayatts, and Alexans along with her sister Jennie Benton to administer the trust after her death. Elite Copts now felt assured that they were giving to an institution that would serve Upper Egypt for the long term.

It was no accident that the refuge was located next to the Nile Sporting Club, for the same families who sold or donated land to Lillian for her orphanage provided land for the club. The playground of the Asyut elite, the club contained tennis courts, a nine-hole golf course, and a box for charitable donations that Lillian periodically emptied.²⁷

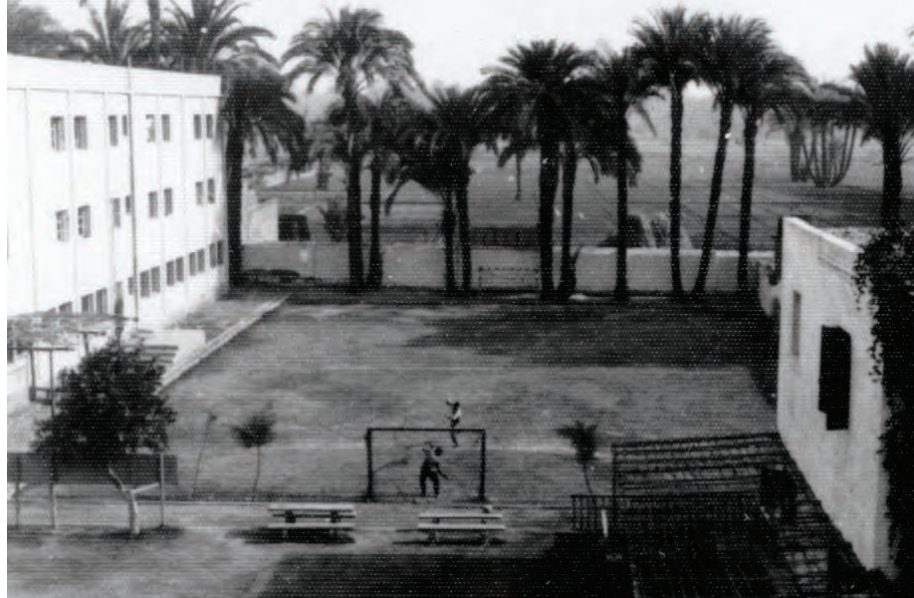
Women such as Lily (Alexan) Khayyat and Esther (Fanus) Wissa, longtime supporters of the orphanage, took out subscriptions, started sewing circles, and sent gifts of wheat, beef, cooked meals, cotton, and cloth. They celebrated births, weddings, and major



“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

An illustration Lillian drew for one of her children’s books.

life events with donations, and adopted Lillian as one of their own. They invited her to meals, took her on outings, and sent her new dresses.



Some of the buildings at the orphanage in Assiout, Egypt, 1969.

Middle strata merchants and poor workers and peasants also gave gifts in kind or sums of money to the orphanage, ranging from free taxi rides for the children to stocks of soap or other items to crumpled bills. Lillian’s letters are full of stories of local generosity, often from people of humble appearance. The community valued Lillian’s commitment to caring for the orphans.

Royal, notable, and general support was needed to fund expansions of space and the quotidian feeding of a constantly growing group of children. The orphanage charged no admission fees, and accepted boys under ten and girls under twelve. Lillian wanted the children long-term in order to be able to work the transformation to body and soul that she envisioned.²⁸

Egyptians increasingly turned to the orphanage for help. Fathers often brought in babies after their wives had died from complications of childbirth. Many infants deposited at the orphanage were thus not technically orphans but offspring of single fathers who had insufficient knowledge, will, or means to raise motherless children. The orphanage also accepted foundlings: “About two weeks ago I had some one knock at my door about midnight and hand me a wee tiny baby, just a few

hours old which they had found in the street,” wrote Lillian in 1921.²⁹

Another set of children arrived with widowed mothers who had no financial resources or willing relatives to help raise fatherless offspring. Roughly ten percent of the population of the orphanage at any given moment consisted of widows, who were indispensable to the orphanage, becoming its main labor force and replacing the servants hired earlier.

Egyptians supported the orphanage in spite of its religious agenda, and in some cases because of it, for it provided a service others were unwilling to provide. The shame of illegitimacy hung over those children whose mothers were not married or whose fathers were unknown, making it hard for them to be accepted into the larger society and for society to care for them.

Another set of stigmatized children who ended up at the home were those with physical handicaps, including children with birth defects and those injured in accidents. The orphanage accepted the offspring of lepers as well as blind girls but not blind boys, for whom there was already a home in Egypt.³⁰ For the children, the orphanage became a large family.

The Anti-Missionary Movement and Its Aftermath

Lillian Trasher opened the doors of the orphanage wide, not denying entrance based on religion. “I take into my orphanage Mohammedans, Syrians, Catholics — anyone. My work is not denominational, although I myself am Pentecostal,” she explained.³¹ Under the terms of the charitable trust written in 1926, the orphanage was established “as a home for the training and education of poor orphans, of any religion and of any denomination.” The trust stipulated that Muslim children were to be trained in Islam, and Christian children “instructed in the teachings of the Assemblies of God.”³²

Serving as matriarch and patriarch of the orphanage family, Lillian sought to save souls. In winter 1926, she began to see results. “After crying and praying like the sound of many waters, they began to testify. One little Mohammedan boy got up on top of the bench and testified saying, ‘In my village I was a sinner but now God has saved me and if I was cut in little pieces I would not serve idols.’ ... Souls are being saved and others baptized in the Holy Spirit.”³³ The intensification of Protestant evangelizing in Egypt in the late 1920s and early 1930s led to a record number of revivals, conversions, and baptisms. But the open attempts to proselytize among Muslims as well as Christians led to a backlash that peaked in the summer of 1933.

An episode that began as a confrontation between a fifteen-year-old orphan girl named Turkiyya Hasan and a matron in the Swedish Salaam Orphanage in Port Said galvanized the country and led to investigations of missionary institutions. “I am very much in need of the prayers of all the Lord’s children as there is a great stir

among all of the Muslims against the missionaries here,” Lillian Trasher wrote in a letter home on June 23, 1933.³⁴

A correspondent in Asyut for the daily Arabic newspaper *al-Jihad*, which prided itself on being in the vanguard of the anti-missionary movement, called upon the authorities to investigate the orphanage.³⁵ Lillian admitted to the inspection officials sent by the governor that the Muslim children went to Christian services along with the other children. She explained that hers was a faith-based enterprise — “the Lord supplies our needs” — and she told them about her own “call to the work.”

She gave them copies of financial reports, pamphlets, and, upon request, a Bible. The governor subsequently called Lillian in for a meeting; while thanking her for what she had done for the poor children of Egypt, he informed her that they were going to take the Muslim children out of the orphanage and build new refuges for them.³⁶

Government officials returned to remove Muslim children, in a move that was celebrated by *al-Jihad*: “July 8th, 1933 was a day of great joy at Asyut when about 64 Moslem boys and girls were taken away from Miss Lillian’s Orphanage.”³⁷ Although Lillian was relieved that she had not been forced out of Egypt like the matron of the Port Said orphanage, she lamented the loss of the children. “Words cannot describe the sad sight as they took them away! ... Pray that the teaching of years will go with them and not die.”³⁸

From the 1930s, the large American Presbyterian mission began retrenching due to the anti-missionary movement in Egypt and decreasing support for foreign missions at home. But Pentecostals were not on the retreat. The orphanage that stood at the cen-

ter of the mission in Egypt settled back into its routine. When the writer Jerome Beatty visited in 1939, there were 647 orphans and 74 widows, and



Two children carrying bundles at the orphanage, 1938.

the orphanage had grown into a virtual village.³⁹

Florence Christie, who taught, delivered babies, and supervised the girls in this period, described working for Lillian: “She possessed a loving, but strong personality, which people sometimes found hard to follow.... She was known to be difficult to work for also because of her high expectations and demands.” There was only one “Mama.” The other women, as Florence Christie quickly learned, were “Aunties.”⁴⁰

Boys were taught artisan skills (carpentry and chair making) and girls trained in domestic tasks (infant care and sewing) along lines that were typical of industrial schools. Both had farming tasks, with girls feeding and collecting chicken eggs and boys working with barn animals. The boys attended primary and secondary schools at the orphanage and could continue on to college if they had the

aptitude. They took up the trades into which they had been apprenticed or took up careers as teachers, clerks, and pastors. Some of the boys became active in the Assemblies of God in Egypt, forming its core. They evangelized in villages, started schools and churches, and staffed the missions scattered about Egypt.⁴¹

Girls attended a general school in preparation for marriage. Lillian made it clear that the girls were not to be hired out as domestic servants, the once expected fate of female orphans; working in a home around unrelated men would compromise their reputations and hurt their chances for marriage. Most of the orphan girls married; some did not and stayed in the home as helpers. A few felt “called” to join American female missionaries in their work outside the orphanage. This was the only career path available to them.

As the promised Axis attack grew closer, American missionaries were evacuated from Egypt. Those in Asyut headed south to the Sudan. Lillian stayed on but sent Florence Christie to America to raise funds, which were in short supply during the war. When cities such as Alexandria were bombed, the orphanage opened its doors to those of its grown children who had become refugees. The orphanage survived the war intact, but faced challenges in its wake when cholera and malarial epidemics devastated the countryside. After the war when Presbyterians were downsizing, Pentecostals sent reinforcements to help Lillian.

Weathering the 1952 Revolution

“It is whispered around the city of Assiut that it is always good to give an offering to the orphanage when God has been good to you!” wrote Lester Sumrall in 1951. With donations from Egyptians and Americans,

the Assiout Orphanage continued to expand. Lillian decided to transform the orphanage hospital into a nursery for babies over seven months of age and to build a new hospital for sick children. Ground was broken for the new building in late 1951; it opened the following year.⁴³ That year marked a sea change in Egyptian politics.

Revolutionary winds transformed Egypt in 1952 when a group of officers led by Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970) toppled King Farouk (r.1936-1952) and inaugurated military rule by a Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). This effectively put an end to the British presence in Egypt as well as to the presence of most of the foreign missionaries they had assisted and protected.

When the RCC toured Upper Egypt in March 1953 as part of an attempt to consolidate power by rallying popular support, they stopped at the orphanage. Prime Minister Muhammad Naguib led the entourage of government officials, local leaders, reporters, and photographers that visited Lillian and the children on the afternoon of March 24. The RCC hoped to demonstrate through the visit to the orphanage their concern for the poor and their genuine interest in social welfare.

Before departing, Naguib inscribed a message in the guest book, part of which read, “I call upon all those who are engaged in social reform and activities to visit this institution and learn from it what they should do if they really wish to achieve.”

The leading Arabic and English dailies — *al-Akhbar*, *al-Ahram*, and the *Egyptian Mail* — covered the visit, giving the orphanage widespread publicity. The press pieces transformed Lillian Trasher from a missionary into a social worker to fit revolutionary times and new social agendas.⁴⁴ Lillian noted that the nice things Naguib said “helped to give the people of Egypt

a more friendly feeling toward us.”⁴⁵ Lillian needed this political capital if she and her institution were to survive revolutionary transformations.

In September 1952, the revolutionaries limited agricultural landholdings. They undercut the main sources of wealth of elite landowning families such as the Wissas, Khayyats, and Alexans — Lillian Trasher’s original patrons. The authorities then began to appropriate and nationalize businesses, properties, hospitals, and schools.

Power clearly shifted from the landed elite to the military and securi-



Lillian Trasher, 1955.

ty forces. The orphanage could no longer look to notable families as major benefactors. In any case, in the 1940s Lillian had already reconstituted the board of the orphanage, replacing deceased Coptic friends with orphans and Assemblies of God representatives.

Lillian did not downsize or plan to leave. At the start of 1957, the



Lillian Trasher surrounded by throngs of children inside the orphanage in 1954. Hazel and Philip Crouch and others are standing behind her in the center aisle.

orphanage head count stood at 1,035, not including refugees from the Suez War.⁴⁶ The next year Lillian built a new school to accommodate the growing numbers. Supporters sent supplies. When a new car got held up in customs, she appealed directly to Nasser to waive the duties. His response — “I would like to tell you that your work for the orphans is very much appreciated by everyone in this country” — reassured Lillian. “I feel it will give me by far the greatest pristage [sic] I have ever had,” she wrote, anticipating it would help her in dealing with the Egyptian authorities.⁴⁷ The Egyptian press recognized her as “Mother of a Thousand.”⁴⁸

No longer young, Lillian carefully updated her affairs. She intended to run the orphanage during her lifetime and then turn it over to a team of handpicked successors. Lillian’s hopes were that the orphanage, which

numbered 1,340 in 1960, would survive under a system of checks and balances — officials of the local Ministry of Social Affairs, orphan successors, and the Assemblies of God Foreign Missions advisors — after her death.

Lillian Trasher cut short a trip to the U.S. in 1960 when she grew ill, not wanting to die and be buried away from Egypt and her orphans. She returned to Asyut, where she celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the orphanage in February 1961. She died on December 17, 1961. The Egyptian and Pentecostal press mourned the passing of a woman called alternatively a “saint,” “virgin mother of thousands of Egyptians,” “Nile Mother,” and “Mama” Lillian.

Many of the former residents of the orphanage returned for the funeral, the largest in Asyut’s history: a six-horse carriage pulled the body through

the streets of the city to a plot in the orphanage cemetery where she was buried alongside helpers and many of her “children.” She had sought to instill American Christian culture and values in the orphans and abandoned children under her care. By the end of her life, after fifty years in Egypt, she considered Egypt her home and the orphanage her family.

The Assiout Orphanage (now called the Lillian Trasher Orphanage) is today run by one of Lillian’s orphans, George Assad. The Assemblies of God of Egypt, which has authority over the orphanage, is the second-largest Protestant denomination in Egypt, with over 100,000 adherents. This success is due in large part to the orphanage, which trained several generations of church leaders and whose ministry of compassion gave the Assemblies of God credibility in this Muslim nation.

Conclusion

Lillian Trasher's orphanage survived real and potential nationalist assaults at pivotal moments — the Revolution of 1919, the anti-missionary movement of 1933, and the Free Officers Revolution in 1952 — because it served an underserved community that sat at the margins of society. While Presbyterians were in retreat from the 1930s, Pentecostal enthusiasm for foreign missions did not wane, and the Assiout Orphanage continued to grow, surpassing in size and longevity other better endowed foreign missionary projects.

The orphanage proved to be the most enduring part of the Pentecostal mission in Egypt. It also became an important symbol of the power of faith for the Assemblies of God, one of the fastest growing churches in the world. In recent decades, the orphanage, which was sometimes known as “Miss Lillian's Orphanage” during her life-

Lillian was permitted to stay on in Egypt when others were expelled or asked to leave because she had earned the trust and admiration of Egyptians at the highest levels.

time and became known as the Lillian Trasher Orphanage after her death, has become a destination for young North American volunteers, who give service to affirm their faith.

Lillian Trasher had an uncanny ability to navigate the cross-currents of political change, thus insuring the longevity and success of the mission.

At critical moments British colonial officials, and later American officials, interceded with help, and a broad base of Americans and other Westerners supported the project with donations. Lillian found a niche in Asyut precisely because Egyptians of all classes supported the venture, though some felt strongly that the home should not raise Muslims, who were removed from the home in the 1930s.

While the colonial state relied on a patchwork of social welfare providers, the postcolonial state moved to take over many of these projects, ousting missionaries and foreigners. Lillian was permitted to stay on in Egypt when others were expelled or asked to leave because she had earned the trust and admiration of Egyptians at the highest levels.

The marginality of women and Pentecostals in the missionary field, the view held by Asyut and Copts in Egypt, and her work with orphans in Muslim society all served to shelter Lillian Trasher's undertaking. While most of the children in the orphanage came after the death of one or both parents, the social shame associated with illegitimacy and birth defects surrounded them all and protected the mission of the orphanage. Lillian cultivated local support from Egyptians who preferred to subcontract the raising of such children to foreigners and foreign support from those who saw her mission as worthwhile. Her initial independence from a board or bureaucracy gave her broad scope for working with local inhabitants and foreign donors in launching and expanding the home.

Ultimately the orphanage worked because the locals shaped it. The marginality of the missionary, the location, and the children allowed the orphanage to grow and flourish in unimagined ways. The children raised one another, with the first generation

of grown girls and boys in turn caring for the next, creating a sense of family for those without the bonds of kinship. This was crucial for their life within the orphanage and later in the larger society outside of it. The labor of widows was also critical to sustaining the home, but shelter came at a price: many of the widows were physically separated and socially distanced from their children. The widows, though, at least maintained ties with their transformed children. Those single mothers who felt forced by social circumstances to abandon their children at birth could not maintain ties: Lillian became the “Nile Mother” of their children. ✨



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Watch the classic documentary film about Lillian Trasher, *The Nile Mother* (1955?) on AGTV: <http://agtv.ag.org/the-nile-mother>

To learn more about the Lillian Trasher Orphanage, go to the official website: <http://www.ltochildren.org>

Donations may be made online (www.worldmissions.ag.org) or mailed to Assemblies of God World Missions, Trasher Memorial Orphanage Account #891133(45), 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802.

Notes continued on page 66



A time of worship at the Grand Prayer Rally held at Yoido Plaza at the World AG Congress, 1994.

The World Assemblies of God Fellowship: United in the Missionary Spirit

By William Molenaar

“The Holy Spirit is the *missionary* Spirit.”

— Melvin Hodges, Assemblies of God missiologist¹

A life-transforming encounter with God, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, has always been central to the missional identity of the Assemblies of God. As a result, the Assemblies of God is one of the largest families of Christian churches in the world. In 2009, the worldwide Assemblies of God claimed over 63 million adherents in 346,108 churches.² However, many may not understand the nature of this global fellowship.

How is the worldwide Assemblies of God family organized and how does it cooperate in the mission of God? Most Assemblies of God (AG) members probably are unfamiliar with the World Assemblies of God Fellowship (WAGF), which is the global cooperative body of over 140 AG national churches. This article introduces readers to the WAGF, providing an account of its origins and development over the past two decades.

The WAGF (originally called World Pentecostal Assemblies of God Fellowship) was established on August 15, 1989, at the International Decade of Harvest Conference. Founding delegates represented various national Pentecostal churches that were historically and theologically connected to the AG and in fraternal relationship with each other.³

Most national churches which hold membership in the WAGF emerged from the missions efforts of the AG USA. However, it is important to note that some national churches began separately from the AG USA. For example, the largest national church, the *Assembléias de Deus* in Brazil, dates its beginning to 1911, three years before the founding general council of the AG USA in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

A history of the AG from a global perspective, tracing the development of the various national churches, has yet to be written. The story of the worldwide AG should be told in

a way that includes the diverse histories, themes, and identity markers found in the Fellowship. However, the pivotal role of AG USA and its missions enterprise in the development of the WAGF cannot be ignored.

Roots in the AG USA

The AG USA, officially known as The General Council of the Assemblies of God, was formed in 1914. Rather than creating a new denomination with complex hierarchical structures and creeds, its founders intended to form a grass-roots Pentecostal organization designed to effectively fulfill the Great Commission (Matt. 28).⁴

This purpose was clearly demonstrated in the initial call for the April 1914 founding General Council, which sought to unify various Pentecostal churches and networks of ministers for greater effectiveness in ministry and missions.⁵ Delegates to the second General Council in November 1914, in a breathtaking display of missional confidence, unanimously passed a resolution committing the young Assemblies of God “to Him for the greatest evangelism that the world has ever seen.”⁶

In the next several decades, the AG USA set out to do just that through an aggressive missions program. At first many missionaries imitated the colonial model of other denominations — establishing mission stations as beachheads in other nations, led by missionaries, and with national pastors on their payroll. At the same time, other missionaries implemented indigenous church principles of developing self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating national churches.⁷

The indigenous church model became the official AG USA foreign missions policy in 1921, under the direction

of Missionary Secretary J. Roswell Flower.⁸ However, it took the AG USA missionaries a number of years to more fully embrace the indigenous church principles.⁹ As a result, the AG fellowship around the world consists of indigenous or national AG organizations which operate autonomously.

The AG has always had an international presence. As the various national churches became stronger, leaders realized they needed to cooperate more closely on missions endeavors. This need was partly met with the formation of the Pentecostal World Conference (PWC) in 1947. Many AG national church leaders participated in the PWC and formed closer relationships. Still, an international body of AG churches was needed to develop a more unified platform for those who identified themselves with the Assemblies of God.

First Attempt to Form a World Fellowship

AG historian Gary McGee noted that the AG USA made a previous attempt at forming an international AG fellowship. The 1957 General Council adopted the following resolution:

WHEREAS, The outreach of the Assemblies of God is resulting in the establishing of national groups of Assemblies of God churches, and whereas these groups of churches, while established through our missionary efforts, are yet self-supporting bodies, and whereas it seems desirable to develop some organizational plan whereby these groups may be more closely integrated into a worldwide fellowship of the Assemblies of God,

BE IT RESOLVED, That the Foreign Missions Department be instructed to take such steps as may seem expedient to develop

plans for the establishing of an International Assemblies of God Fellowship by which authorized representatives of national Assemblies of God groups may meet together at regular intervals for fellowship and conference in the interests of world evangelism by the closer co-operation of national Assemblies of God groups.¹⁰

Proposals for this international organization were further explored in the 1960s.¹¹ Unfortunately these plans never materialized, partly because

The indigenous church model became the official AG USA foreign missions policy in 1921.

the various national churches feared domination by the Americans.¹² Nevertheless, in the 1960s a number of regional conferences consisting of AG constituencies and other fraternally-related groups began to convene, which strengthened cooperation among the national churches.¹³

Formation of the WAGF

When the vision for an international AG body was finally actualized over thirty years later, it was the result of an evangelism initiative, the “Decade of Harvest, launched by the AG USA. This initiative aimed to encourage American churches to intensify evangelistic efforts during the decade leading up to the year 2000. The Division of Foreign Missions (DFM) expanded this initiative to include a vision for unity among the various national AG churches. AG USA missions leader J. Philip Hogan invited interna-

tional church leaders to convene for a Decade of Harvest Conference in Springfield, Missouri, on July 13-14, 1988. Hogan gave two main reasons for this meeting:

For a number of months now, we have been awakened by the Lord to convene a body of world Assemblies of God leaders to discuss and pray about two important matters.

The first of these, brethren, is that, by God’s grace, we are now numerically around 20 million strong in this world. I am speaking of the fraternal fellowship we call the Assemblies of God. God has not brought us to this place to be boastful but rather to be challenged with the fact that we must use our numbers and strength to confront this century with the mightiest evangelism and church planting surge the world has ever known. The year 2000 looms before us. From many quarters of the world there comes the cry, “Let the real church of Jesus Christ rise up together and finish the Great Commission and make possible the return of our blessed Lord.”

Secondly, we need to prayerfully explore together how we may unite ourselves in a simple but effective worldwide fellowship that will help us to attain this goal.¹⁴

At this historic meeting, Paul Yonggi Cho, pastor of Yoido Full Gospel Church, Seoul, South Korea, was one of the first to take the floor. He proposed to form a “world Assemblies of God fellowship.” Discussion followed, and delegates expressed an openness to either a loose or strong organization, if it would further their goal of world evangelism. A provisional committee was appointed and

described the consensus which developed:

... a need for some kind of a loose and yet effective world-wide Assemblies of God structure ... [that] should have a coordinating and consulting function. It would not take away in any way from the sovereignty and autonomy of the national churches. It would not hinder but rather enhance the Pentecostal work in its many forms in various cultural, political, and religious context[s] around the world. It would not dictate but serve and lead by serving.¹⁵

This committee also summarized the six purposes for which such an organization would exist:

1. Promote and facilitate world evangelization.
2. Coordinate world relief.
3. Coordinate the use of media and other technological resources to promote the cause of Christ in a way pleasing to Him.
4. Provide a strong international platform to speak out on behalf of the suffering and persecuted churches.
5. Coordinate theological education.
6. Produce an international directory of Pentecostal churches, missions and other Pentecostal agencies to help share information.¹⁶

Another provisional committee was asked to explore the details of how to best craft an international organization and to present a proposal to the delegates when they would meet again one year later.¹⁷ At the end of the meeting, delegates signed a covenant statement called the “Declaration of a Decade of Harvest,” committing the



Peter Kuzmic (right) and interpreter Won Park Lee (left) at microphone addressing crowd at the first World Assemblies of God Congress, Seoul, Korea, September 29-October 3, 1994.

national churches to work together for world evangelization.¹⁸

The elected provisional committee met May 15-16, 1989, in Springfield, Missouri.¹⁹ Discussion revolved around Australian leader Andrew Evans’ proposed constitution, which the committee modified throughout the course of the meetings.²⁰ Committee members settled upon the name “World Pentecostal Assemblies of God Fellowship.”²¹

Whether the new fellowship should have a strong or loose organizational structure became a significant point of discussion. Immanuel Lazaro, General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Tanzania, advocated a strong organizational identity:

... I think, we should stand strongly about how we can form this one strong fellowship ... we need to have a strong fellowship in order to be able to accomplish our goals, we shouldn’t be afraid of men thinking that we are trying to form something like the Roman Catholics are doing. We know that ___ are not ___ to do so, but we shouldn’t be afraid of actually coming together to do something so that we can strengthen our fellowship.²²

The provisional committee did not develop a proposal to develop a complex organizational system for the fel-

lowship.²³ Instead, the committee proposed a simple structure which called for at least one meeting of the world fellowship every three years, and the election of a twelve-member executive committee, which would be comprised of regional representatives.²⁴

While the new fellowship’s structure stirred much debate, its doctrine did not. The provisional committee members decided, without much discussion, that the short doctrinal statement published in the *Pentecostal Evangel* would suffice.²⁵ This statement was later included in the first constitution of the WAGF in 1989.²⁶ Interestingly, this short statement of faith did not include positions on the ordinance of communion, tongues-speech as the initial physical evidence of Spirit baptism, or the sequence and timing of eschatological events such as the rapture.²⁷

The international representatives gathered in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 14-15, 1989, at the Decade of Harvest Conference and discussed the provisional committee’s proposal for a worldwide Assemblies of God fellowship. AG USA General Superintendent G. Raymond Carlson gave the keynote sermon at the conference. When the sermon was finished, and before the business began, American missions leader Loren Triplett delivered a word of knowledge:

Surely the foundations of the earth

are in place by the decree of the Almighty. So His promises are forevermore. Behold, if thou shalt trust in the Lord thy God, the ways of man will be set aside and the ways of Divine ordinance shall be set in place. For it is the Lord, it is the Word of the Lord God Almighty that shall lead thee. Open thy heart. Attune thy ears that the voice of God may direct thy ways and His promises shall be thy foundation.

Immediately after this word, J. Philip Hogan proclaimed, “Hallelujah. Brethren, there is no rank among us. We are brethren. We are brethren.”²⁸



Nearly 17,000 people gathered in the Ibirapuera Gymnasium in São Paulo, Brazil, for the opening of the 2nd World Assemblies of God Congress, 1997.

Hogan, who served as missions director for the AG USA, repeatedly made the point that the world fellowship would not be a vehicle of control for the American church. He indicated that the structure of the new organization had not yet been determined. He introduced the provisional committee and noted that the agenda for the meeting should not be “dominated by those of us in the West or in the American infrastructure.”²⁹ After the provisional committee shared its proposal to the delegates, Hogan explained:

Those of us in the Assemblies of God, U.S.A., and Division of Foreign Missions, our founding fathers committed us to do exactly what we have done, and you are here as a proof of the fact that in some cases we must have done it quite well, because you are here representing great sovereign, individual movements around the world. We do not dominate you. We coordinate with you. You do not take orders from us. We don’t want you to. You stand among us. We are not patrons as against peers. We are all peers, one with another. We respect your sovereignty and well we should. I don’t think any of

us ever entertained for one minute the idea of a worldwide western dominated, or any other kind of dominated, world structure.³⁰

The next morning, discussion centered around the name of the new organization. Following some confusion over the meeting’s procedures, delegates unanimously voted to strike all motions and proposals and to start over after the lunch break.

During the lunch break, the provisional committee met with Carlson and Hogan and hammered out an

amendment to the provisional committee’s proposal for the structure of the organization. Peter Kuzmic, as the representative of the provisional committee, presented the proposal to the delegates. The proposal created an executive committee, consisting of elected members from various regions of the world. The amendment added two AG USA leaders (general superintendent and executive director of DFM) as ex officio members of the executive committee.³¹

Guillermo Fuentes of Mexico requested clarification whether the American ex officio members would be the representatives from North America. Kuzmic responded:

... we did not change anything in regional representation that is elected regionally. We only added the two executive officers as ex officio members of the committee. The two regionally elected, that remains as it was originally proposed. Now, the additional proposal was to bring about a more effective, harmonious working relationship. I think it is clear to all of us, or most of us, that without the Assemblies of God U.S.A. and DFM, what we are talking here cannot happen around the world, because you brethren in North America have the technology, the expertise, the organizational structures, and every other blessing, and this is behind reason, not me. I’ll not elaborate this further. I think it is self-evident.³²

After further discussion, delegates unanimously approved the provisional committee’s amendment. They also voted to recognize the provisional committee as the first executive committee of the WAGF, which was charged with “represent-

ing our world interest in the Decade of Harvest and the development of the World Pentecostal Assemblies of God Fellowship.”³³ In the end, the delegates did not substantially modify the provisional committee’s initial proposal, apart from the addition of the ex officio positions.

Apparently, the WAGF leaders felt these ex officio positions were needed because of the AG USA’s significant role as an organizational support and resource for the WAGF, but at the same time they wanted to be careful to not suggest any sort of American dominance. While details surrounding the inclusion of ex officio members may seem insignificant, they are important because they both explain the AG USA’s level of involvement and demonstrate how the WAGF leaders carefully navigated possible tensions over leadership issues.

Purpose and Activities

What was the purpose of the WAGF? The first constitution of the WAGF stated:

The purpose of this Fellowship shall be to pursue the fulfillment of our Lord’s command to evangelize the lost in the shortest possible time, providing them the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel in all of its fullness, by encouraging and assisting one another, promoting harmonious relationships, and seeking the most effective means of its accomplishment under the dynamic leadership of the Holy Spirit.³⁴

The constitution also provided for a General Assembly, consisting of representatives of each member church, to meet at least once every three years, while a smaller Executive Committee was to meet at least yearly.³⁵

Initially, the WAGF cooperative

efforts consisted of more intentional communications between the national churches through correspondence, periodicals (*Update*, *World Report*, *Worldlink*, *WAGRA World Report*), and prayer initiatives. Formal cooperative programs developed more slowly. At a 1991 meeting, Executive Committee members brainstormed about ways to better publicize the WAGF and to

Since its formation in 1989, the WAGF has attempted to bring greater unity among the various AG national churches for the purpose of world evangelization.

attract more member churches. The minutes recorded the following suggestions by Peter Kuzmic:

... strengthening leadership, having more brethren involved representing this movement around the world. He also suggested working groups to deal with specific issues, serving as resources to Pentecostals everywhere. For instance, a theological group, also a missiological strategist group who could give us the media, which persons, which dates, and so forth for a particular country’s emphasis. He felt we should have the literature prepared for it in advance. He also felt a media or communications group could channel technological resources where there are experts and visionaries to help us. Why not a prayer working group to pray for specifics and to notify the other area of pertinent dates and needs to

pray for? We must mobilize all of our resources.³⁶

Some reservations were expressed concerning how to finance these suggestions. Still, many of these proposals were implemented in the strategic planning for the 1992 and 1994 conferences, and more recently by the creation of the theological and missions commissions in 2009.

One of the WAGF’s most significant cooperative programs — the World Assemblies of God Relief and Development Agency (WAGRA) — was created in 1993 by the Executive Committee. The WAGF leaders intended to create a mechanism through which members of the AG family who were in need might be aided by other members with abundance. The four objectives of the WAGRA are: 1) Crisis and Disaster Response, 2) Health and Community Services Programs, 3) Development and Maintenance Programs, and 4) Environmental Concerns.³⁷

Another major function of the WAGF is to provide a unified global voice to advocate for AG members experiencing persecution. In its early years, the WAGF wrote to various governments and ambassadors on behalf of persecuted individuals and churches. The WAGF’s Commission on Religious Liberty, formally established in 1999, works with other human rights agencies and engages governments on behalf of church members who are suffering persecution, oppression, or restriction.

In 2009, the Executive Council formed a theological commission to oversee doctrinal matters and a missions commission (International Committee on Emerging Missions and Unreached People) to encourage the formation of strategic partnerships among missions organizations. A number of international ministries

also serve as instruments of unity within the worldwide AG family of churches, including: Teen Challenge, Convoy of Hope, Global University, Global Initiative (formerly Center for Ministry to Muslims), Center for Holy Lands Studies, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, Royal Rangers International, Healthcare Ministries, Life Publishers, Network211, Global AIDS Partnership, Sustain Hope, and others.³⁸

Conclusion

Since its formation in 1989, the WAGF has attempted to bring greater unity among the various AG national churches for the purpose of world evangelization. In the years following the formation of the WAGF, the AG has experienced unprecedented growth. From 1989 to 2009, the AG family expanded from 16 million to 63 million adherents, from 109,645 to 357,727 ministers and missionaries, and from 117,450 to 346,108 churches and preaching points.³⁹

The formation of the WAGF was achieved in 1989, despite previous attempts, because its founders successfully navigated tensions involving organizational structure, power, identity, and finances. Remarkably, the minutes do not reflect any theological tensions arising from the cross-cultural interaction of the AG national churches at the international level.

In some ways, the WAGF and the AG USA were formed with similar values. In both cases, the founding members valued independence and autonomy, while realizing the need for mutual dependence and unity for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission. Similar motivations inspired the founders of both organizations: 1) a desire to work together in Spirit-empowered evangelism, 2) a sense of eschatological urgency, 3) the practical need for organizational

unity, 4) the need for more effective missions and education, and 5) a suspicion of hierarchical institutions.

The WAGF has brought greater unity and a sense of structural identity to the broader AG family. However, organizational adjustments and closer cooperation between the various national churches may be needed to better fulfill the WAGF founding vision for a dynamic international missions organization. The WAGF offers an opportunity for the AG to become known as a people of reconciliation across all racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic boundaries because “we were all baptized in one Spirit so as to form one body — whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor. 12:13).✝



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NOTES

¹Melvin L. Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and its Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1977), 132.

²*Current Facts and Highlights*, 2011 Issue 1 (Springfield, MO: AGWM Research Office), 1. For more information on these statistics, see endnote 39.

³The World Pentecostal Assemblies of God Fellowship (WPAGF) was renamed the World Assemblies of God Fellowship (WAGF) on September 16, 1993 by the Executive Committee, a decision ratified by the General Assembly on August 7, 2000.

⁴Edith L. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 116.

⁵E. N. Bell, “General Convention of Pentecostal

Saints and Churches of God in Christ, Hot Springs, Arkansas, April 2 to 12, 1914,” *Word and Witness*, December 20, 1913, 1. See also: *General Council Minutes*, April 1914, 2.

⁶*General Council Minutes*, April–November 1914, 12. Evangelism and missions was initially the primary organizational focus for the AG USA. John W. Welch, a founding member of the Executive Presbytery and later Chairman (1915–1920; 1923–1925) and Secretary (1920–1923) wrote, “The General Council of the Assemblies of God was never meant to be an institution; it is just a missionary agency,” in “A Missionary Movement,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, November 13, 1920, 8.

⁷For a history of the AG’s implementation of indigenous church principles, see Gary B. McGee’s definitive two-volume work, *This Gospel — Shall Be Preached: A History and Theology of Assemblies of God Foreign Missions* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1986, 1989).

⁸*General Council Minutes*, 1921, 60–61.

⁹AG missiologist Melvin Hodges’ writings were instrumental in the AG USA’s implementation of the “three selves” of the indigenous church model. See: Melvin Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1953).

¹⁰*General Council Minutes*, 1957, 31–32.

¹¹McGee, *This Gospel — Shall Be Preached*, Vol. 2, 108.

¹²*Ibid.*, Vol. 1, 245. More information on why this initial fellowship did not materialize in the 1960s can be found in Vol. 2, 109–110.

¹³*Ibid.*, Vol. 2, 108–109. Examples of regional conferences include: the Central American Fellowship (Dec 1960, Matagalpa, Nicaragua) which became the Committee of Executives of the Assemblies of God, representing Central America and the northern republics of South America. Other examples are the Committee of the Assemblies of God of South America (1961, Santiago, Chile), the Pan-African Conference (Sep 2–9, 1964, Nigeria), and the Far East Fellowship (1960, Hong Kong). Research is needed on the origin and formation of these various conferences.

¹⁴J. Philip Hogan, letter to Decade of Harvest (DOH) delegates, November 17, 1987, 1. FPHC.

¹⁵Transcript: “DOH Committee Meeting, Springfield, Missouri, July 13–14, 1988 Minutes,” 40. DOH Files, FPHC. This was taken from the summary of the morning session on July 13, 1988, which was given by Peter Kuzmic. Kuzmic chaired the 1988 provisional committee appointed by J.

Philip Hogan. The provisional committee consisted of the following appointees: Peter Kuzmic of Eurasia (chairman), Paul Cho Yonggi of Asia Pacific, Jean Pawentaore Ouedraogo of Africa, John Bueno of Latin America, and Dr. Andrew Evans of Australia. Gary McGee served as recording secretary. Gary McGee rightly noted, "The opportunities that such an international fellowship present are enormous. Closer cooperation, even while preserving the independence of each organization, could make important advances in coordinating the activities of national churches, their missionaries, and the endeavors of the Assemblies of God (U.S.A.) for evangelism and discipleship training. Overlapping efforts, including the sometimes redundant expenditure of resources, could be diminished as the participants close ranks to pursue their common objectives. The conception of the international Decade of Harvest initiative, with its fraternal basis and commitment to Pentecostal spirituality, may herald the final triumph of the venerated indigenous church principles, long held and implemented by the Assemblies of God" (McGee, *This Gospel — Shall Be Preached*, Vol. 2, 278).

¹⁶Most of the delegates of the meeting approved of the provisional committee's summarized proposal by a show of hands. See transcript: "DOH Committee Meeting minutes, July 13-14, 1988," 41-42. FPHC. The provisional committee used language which envisioned a strong worldwide AG organization and identity ("coordinate," "provide a strong international platform," and "produce"). Yet, in the first constitution, as well as later revisions, the descriptive language shifts by reflecting a loose or weaker organizational structure ("promote," "encourage," "support," "affirm," and "provide non-legislative means"). See: World Pentecostal Assemblies of God Fellowship, *Constitution and Bylaws*, 1989, 1. FPHC.

¹⁷The provisional committee was made up of representatives who were elected by the 1988 Conference delegates from their respective regions of the World: From Asia, Andrew Evans (Australia) and Prince Guneratnam; from Eurasia, Daniel Munshi (Bangladesh) and Peter Kuzmic (Yugoslavia); from Latin America, John Bueno (CELAD organization & Northern area), Jose Wellington da Costa (Brazil and Southern part), and Errol Bhola (Caribbean); from Africa, Immanuel Lazaro (Tanzania), and Jean Pawentaore Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso); and from North America, William Cornelius (Canada), and J. Philip Hogan (USA). Yonggi Cho was unanimously added to this provisional committee, and J. Philip Hogan was appointed chairman by the international delegates.

¹⁸The Declaration was technically signed on July 14, 1988, although the document states the date of the last day of the meeting. See transcript: "DOH Committee Meeting minutes, July 13-14, 1988," 105-108. FPHC. Delegates discussed whether to use the word "Fellowship" in the declaration statement, or to instead use the terms "Association" or "Network." One commented that Fellowship "does not seem to denote the kind of aggressive stance we want to take on accomplishing the purpose for which we were gathered" (p. 114). The minutes indicate that most delegates believed the term Association would be misinterpreted and would be perceived as threatening the autonomy of various member churches. In the end, delegates favored the term Fellowship by an almost unanimous vote (p. 115).

¹⁹"International DOH Provisional Committee Meeting minutes, May 15-16, 1989," 1. DOH Files, FPHC.

²⁰Nancy Pope on behalf of Andrew Evans, letter to J. Philip Hogan [received May 1, 1989]. DOH Files. FPHC.

²¹There were a number of factors at play in this determination: 1) identification as AG, 2) identification as "Pentecostal," 3) inclusivity, 4) cultural sensitivities, and 5) linguistic sensitivities. For this discussion see transcript: "International Decade of Harvest Provisional Committee Meeting, May 15 and 16, 1989, Ramada Hotel, Hawthorn Park Springfield, Missouri, U.S.A.," 19-27. DOH Files, FPHC.

²²*Ibid.*, 18-19. The transcriber of the committee meeting minutes was unable to complete the missing words. See similar comments by Peter Kuzmic on page 17.

²³For Hogan's comments on this see: *Ibid.*, day two, 6-8.

²⁴See the provisional committee's final proposal to the 1989 delegates in: Notebook: 1989 International Decade of Harvest Conference. FPHC.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 35.

²⁶World Pentecostal Assemblies of God Fellowship, *Constitution and Bylaws*, 1989, 1. FPHC.

²⁷The WAGF's Statement of Faith was expanded to include these doctrines in 2000.

²⁸Transcript: "Decade of Harvest Conference, Westin Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana, August 14-15, 1989," 7. DOH Files, FPHC.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 10.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 83. G. Raymond Carlson later echoed this sentiment (p. 88). Francesco Toppi of Italy also gratefully affirmed both Hogan and Carlson's comments (p. 90).

³¹"International DOH Conference minutes, August 14-15, 1989," 12. FPHC.

³²Transcript: "DOH Conference, Westin Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana, August 14-15, 1989," 108. DOH Files, FPHC.

³³"International DOH Conference minutes, August 14-15, 1989," 13. FPHC. The WAGF dropped the ex officio positions from its Executive Committee in 2000. However, the WAGF General Assembly reinstated the director of AG USA World Missions as an ex officio member of the Executive Council in 2008. See: "WAGF minutes, 2008," 3. FPHC.

³⁴World Pentecostal Assemblies of God Fellowship, *Constitution and Bylaws*, 1989, 1. FPHC.

³⁵Here is a listing of the WAGF general assemblies and congresses: provisional meeting 1988 (Springfield, MO, USA); 1989 (Indianapolis, IN, USA); 1992 (Oslo, Norway); 1st Congress 1994 (Seoul, Korea); 1995 (Jerusalem, Israel); 2nd Congress 1997 (São Paulo, Brazil); 3rd Congress 2000 (Indianapolis, IN, USA); 4th Congress 2005 (Sydney, Australia); 5th Congress 2008 (Lisbon, Portugal); 6th Congress 2011 (Chennai, India). The Executive Committee was renamed the Executive Council in approximately 2003.

³⁶"International DOH Executive Committee Meeting, Hong Kong, February 13-14, 1991 Minutes," 13.

³⁷*Constitution and Bylaws of the World Assemblies of God Relief and Development Agency*, September 28, 1994. FPHC.

³⁸George O. Wood, "World Assemblies of God Fellowship: Uniting to Finish the Task," in *Toward Pentecostal Cooperation: Emerging Power for the World Evangelization*, ed. by Grant McClung and Arto Hamalainen (forthcoming 2011).

³⁹The WAGF does not keep statistics on the number of adherents in its member churches. The statistics in this article are taken from the Worldwide Assemblies of God Constituency Report, compiled by AG USA World Missions. The worldwide AG constituency includes "Pentecostal elements with which Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM) has a fraternal relationship even though they may not use the term 'Assemblies of God' to identify themselves." In 2009 the Assemblies of God had constituents in 213 nations and territories; 140 of those nations had organized national churches that formally affiliated with the WAGF. See "Official Statistics Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions, 1989" (Springfield, MO: DFM, 1989) and "Worldwide Assemblies of God Constituency 2010 Report" (Springfield, MO: AGWM, 2010).



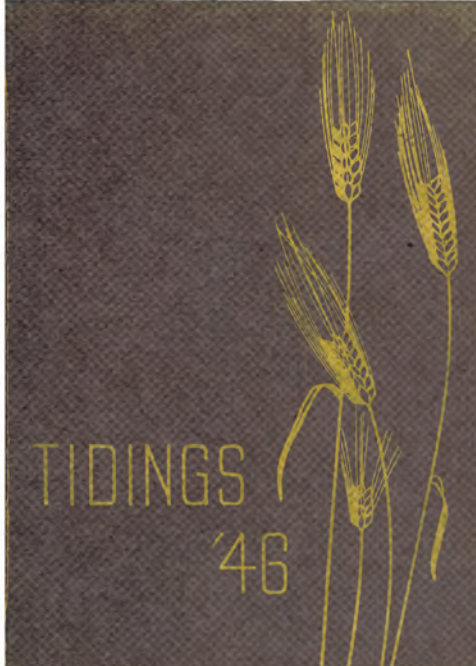
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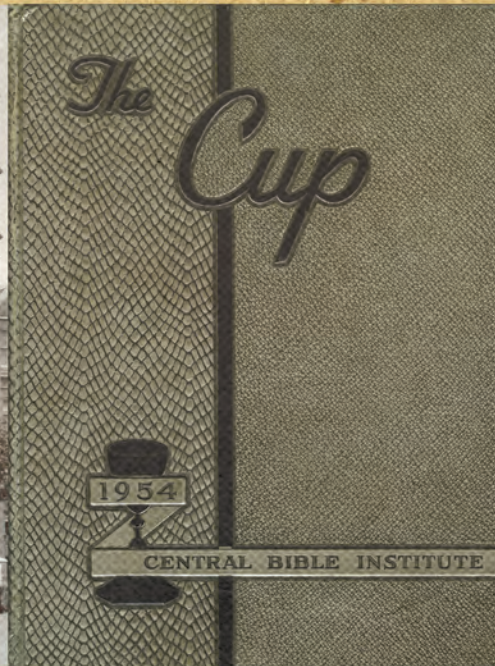
The Pioneer
1959



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CENTRAL BIBLE INSTITUTE

In Spirit and Truth: Higher Education in the Assemblies of God

By P. Douglas Chapman

Training and educating Pentecostal Christians for life and service has been an integral part of the Assemblies of God (AG) since its organization in 1914. The call for the first General Council included this declaration: “We may have a proposition to lay before the body of a general Bible training school with a literary department for our people.”¹ A subsequent announcement restated this purpose as follows: “As Jesus commanded in the great commission, that the Gospel should be taught, preached and published in all the world before His return, we should consider the Ministerial, School and Publishing interests, to the glory of God, that Jesus may be with us even unto the end of the world.”² In the decades following that meeting, the AG has been a leader in establishing a variety of educational institutions for training and equipping its constituents for life and service in the church.

The Emergence of Pentecostal Bible Schools, 1900-1920

Although no plan for a Bible training school emerged from the 1914 General Council, delegates did endorse the Gospel School in Findlay, Ohio, operated by Thomas King Leonard (1861-1946). This school, like many others of its time, consisted of short-term studies offered in just twenty-one weeks, October to April. Furthermore, the council recommended “students in other localities avail themselves of the courses offered in other Full Gospel or Pentecostal schools within their reach, and avail themselves of all opportunities for the study of the Word.”³ While the council did not identify those schools by name or location, no less than ten schools then in existence had embraced the

Pentecostal message.⁴

Over the next eight years, the General Council endorsed six other schools. Included in that number were: Mount

Tabor Bible Training School (Chicago, Illinois);⁵ Pacific Bible and Missionary Training School (San Francisco, California);⁶ Beulah Heights Bible School (North Bergen, New Jersey);⁷ Rochester Bible Training School (Rochester, New York); Bethel Bible Institute (Newark, New Jersey);⁸ and Southern California Bible Institute (Los Angeles, California).⁹

Many Pentecostals had enthusiastically adopted the “Itinerary Bible School” model (short-term classes lasting a few weeks), particularly in the decade from 1910-1919. Daniel

Charles Owen Opperman¹⁰ (1872-1926)

was the leading sponsor of these short-term Bible schools, hosting numerous schools in Alabama, Arkansas, Iowa, Missouri, and Texas.¹¹ Opperman’s educational philosophy was simple; he taught his students “how to pray, how to study God’s Word, how to know the Lord and walk with Him.”¹²

Despite the relative success of these Bible Schools, the first generation of Pentecostal Christians recognized the need for more permanent and structured training schools for its members and adherents. This realization soon led to the establishment of schools owned and operated by various Pentecostal denominations.

The Formation of Permanent Bible Schools, 1920-1945

The privately owned and operated Bible schools, graduating several dozen students per year, simply could not

Training and educating Pentecostal Christians for life and service has been an integral part of the Assemblies of God since its organization in 1914.



Central Bible Institute sign at the entrance of the campus, 1929.

meet the swelling need for educated and equipped workers. In the fall of 1920, the first school operated by the General Council opened its doors — Midwest Bible School in Auburn, Nebraska. The school closed after one year due to financial difficulties and a shortage of teachers and staff.¹³ In 1922, the General Council autho-

The Great Depression of the 1930s placed a financial hardship on the entire nation, and Pentecostal Christians, already at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale, found it especially difficult to sustain their Bible schools.

riized the establishment of Central Bible Institute (CBI) in Springfield, Missouri. Led by Daniel Warren Kerr

(1856-1927), Frank M. Boyd (1883-1984) and William Irvin Evans (1887-1954), the school developed a three-year diploma program. By 1939 student enrollment had reached 438 and the school was sending out more than 100 graduates each year.¹⁴

Many other Pentecostal Bible schools struggled for survival over the next twenty-five years. There were at least two inter-related causes for their life-threatening condition. First, there was an uncontrolled proliferation of Bible schools after World War I. Through the leadership of visionary individuals and local churches, some eighteen Bible schools were established within the AG and at least another twenty-seven Bible schools were founded by other Pentecostal denominations.¹⁵ Second, the Great Depression of the 1930s placed a financial hardship on the entire nation, and Pentecostal Christians, already at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale, found it especially difficult to sustain their Bible schools. “Our present Bible schools,” observed P. C. Nelson, president of Southwestern Bible School, “were built from small

donations.”¹⁶

These schools found themselves in competition with each other for student enrollment, financial support and resources necessary to secure their futures. The combined weight of these external forces resulted in the closure or merger of more than a dozen AG Bible schools by 1945.

The Development of Liberal Arts Education, 1945-1965

The end of World War II led to a flurry of activity within AG Bible institutes. They expanded their curriculum, offered various bachelor’s degrees and sought accreditation.

Expanded Curriculum

As early as 1934, P. C. Nelson, president of Southwestern Bible School called for new courses in the curriculum that would prepare students for careers in education, music, business, engineering, architecture, and the industrial arts.¹⁷ North Central Bible Institute opened a two-year Business College in 1938,¹⁸ while Southwestern Bible Institute, after its name change and move to Waxahachie, Texas, added a junior college in 1944.



Ray Roepke, a student at Central Bible Institute, is reading *Bible Doctrines* by P. C. Nelson, ca. 1948.



D. C. O. Opperman and students at the short-term Bible school held at Hot Springs, Arkansas, just prior to the first General Council, 1914.

Northwest Bible Institute did the same in 1955, citing the need to satisfy the increasing demands for liberal arts training “in a Pentecostal environment” as its motivation.¹⁹

Several AG Bible schools began extending their programs by adding a fourth year of coursework and offered various bachelor degrees: Southern California Bible College (1939); Northwest Bible Institute (1947); Central Bible Institute (1948); Southwestern Bible Institute (1950); Bethany Bible Institute (1954); and North Central Bible Institute (1956).

Two schools added a fifth year of coursework resulting in graduate degrees: Central Bible Institute (1949) and Southwestern Bible Institute (1950).²⁰

Concurrent with these curricular modifications by the Bible schools was a move in the late 1940s and early 1950s on the part of the General Council to establish a Pentecostal liberal arts college. In the fall of 1955, Evangel College opened for classes amid some controversy over the role

of liberal arts education within a spirit-filled community of believers.²¹ To safeguard the Bible institute’s role as the center for ministerial and missionary training, Evangel College was limited to offering just 22 credits of Bible and theology.²²

Accreditation

Assemblies of God schools sought accreditation, in part, because the provisions of the GI Bill — federal funding for tuition, textbooks, fees and academic services for veterans — were only available at accredited



Students from Glad Tidings Bible Institute, San Francisco, CA are assisting evangelist John Goben with a street meeting, 1925.

A NOTE FROM Bob Cook

The nineteen AG institutions of higher education continue to train large numbers of future pastoral leaders and missionaries, even though there are many other “delivery systems” one can use to complete educational requirements for credentialing with the AG. It is significant that even though the academic programs for AG schools have continued to expand through the past few decades, the number of students graduating with majors focused on ministerial training has increased at most schools. In fact, the largest major for most AG colleges continues to be the Pastoral Theology/Ministry/Church Leadership major.

In 1996, the number of grads from AG schools majoring in ministry totaled 854; in 2009 that number had increased to 1,086 — an increase of 27%. Of all the students graduating from AG colleges in 2009 (3,277) 33% of them majored in ministry.* It could be truthfully stated that while academic programs have proliferated at AG colleges and non-ministry majors continue to grow in popularity, the colleges continue to faithfully fill a vital role for the fellowship by training large amounts of future church leaders in their classrooms.

*Statistics gathered by the Alliance for AG Higher Education office from all 19 endorsed colleges in early 2010.

G. Robert Cook is the Executive Vice President of the Alliance for Assemblies of God Higher Education.

institutions.²³ Since none of the country’s Bible schools were accredited, a series of discussions were held that led to the founding of the Accrediting Association of Bible Institutes and Bible Colleges (AABC) in 1947.²⁴ Central Bible Institute, Glad Tidings Bible Institute, Metropolitan Bible Institute, North Central Bible Institute, South-Eastern Bible Institute, Southern California Bible College, and Southwestern Bible Institute became charter members in 1948.²⁵

As the baby boomers were coming of age, the Pentecostal Bible school movement experienced a startling metamorphosis. The traditional Bible-based curriculum gave way to increased general education courses and new majors in business, elementary education, music and psychology appeared. Gradually, the four-year bachelor’s degree replaced the three-year diploma. Professional accreditation through the AABC soon yielded to regional accreditation; as a result, several schools abandoned their historic Bible school identity and embraced new identities as four-year liberal arts colleges. It is doubtful that any Pentecostal educators of the early 1960s were listening to Bob Dylan. Nevertheless, he was right — “the times they [were] a-changin’.”²⁶

The Creation of the Comprehensive Universities, 1960-Present

Assemblies of God higher education in the last fifty years, with some exceptions, moved away from the Bible school model and embraced the comprehensive university model.

During the 1960s, several AG Bible schools sought regional accreditation for their programs. These decisions brought additional pressure upon the schools to broaden their curriculum in general education and introduce additional non-ministry

majors. Southwestern Bible Institute sought regional accreditation in 1960. Southern California Bible College and Bethany Bible College followed suit in 1964 and 1966 respectively. Southern California dropped the word Bible from its name at that time, and three years later, gained an endorsement from the California Department of Education for its elementary education program.²⁷

As the Bible schools sought and



Denworth Hall at Zion Bible College, Haverhill, MA.

received regional accreditation, they severed their accreditation connections with the American Association of Bible Colleges.²⁸ These schools reduced the required number of required Bible and theology credits by more than one-third, thus making room in their curriculum for expanded non-ministry course offerings.²⁹ The AABC standard had been 30 credits of Bible and theology in all majors; the AG lowered its standard to only 18 credits of Bible and theology for all non-ministry majors.³⁰

As the number of non-ministry majors grew, specialized accreditation was required for programs in elementary and secondary education, nursing, and social work. Several schools



Students congregating near a fountain at Southeastern University, Lakeland, FL.

added graduate majors in ministry and other areas of professional training including business, counseling, education, and psychology. Finally, seven Bible schools changed their names; six by adding the word “university” and seven by deleting the word “Bible,” thus confirming that they were, indeed, no longer Bible schools.³¹

Other schools have chosen to maintain their primary focus on ministerial training. These schools — the

ministerial education.

In 1961, the General Council authorized the establishment of a graduate school of theology, and this became a reality under the leadership of Cordas C. Burnett (1917-1975).³² The first students were enrolled in 1973. Today, the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary (AGTS) offers numerous graduate and doctoral degrees in divinity, ministry and missions.³³ In January 2011, the boards of direc-

tion schools in Springfield, Missouri, for the purpose of strengthening the overall academic offerings and the financial base of the schools.³⁴

The Rebirth of Practical Ministry Training

In 2003, the General Council of the AG recognized the role of several types of short-term training programs. It passed a resolution broadening the Commission on Christian Higher Education’s statement of purpose enabling it to become “a resource and provide partnership opportunities for other ministerial training institutions, including church-based Bible institutes, Master’s Commissions, non-traditional educational systems, and other entities providing ministerial training.”³⁵ This resolution provides ample evidence that training and preparation for ministry and lay service in the AG has come full circle; once again, short-term programs of discipleship and training are seen as valuable and significant options for many persons seeking an alternative to four years of collegiate training.

The best known of these “other ministerial training institutions” is the Master’s Commission (MC) program. Founded in 1984 through the efforts of First Assembly of God (Phoenix, Arizona), Master’s Commission affords young adults an eight-month immersion experience in Christian discipleship, spiritual formation,



Administration building at Evangel University, Springfield, MO.

largest of which are Central Bible College, Trinity Bible College, and Zion Bible College — continue their strong emphasis on spiritual and min-

isterial education. The boards of directors of AGTS, Central Bible College, and Evangel University unanimously adopted a resolution agreeing to work toward consolidation of the three resi-

Scripture memorization, practical ministry training, music, evangelism and missionary outreach.³⁶ In 2009, AG churches reported more than 352 Master's Commissions were operating in nearly every state with an enroll-

ment that exceeded 2,000 participants.³⁷

conducted one weekend per month (a minimum of five hours) for nine months. Students also complete various levels of independent study, readings, written assignments, and testing. Proctored by the district staff and

the Berean Bible Institute in October 1926, in San Diego, California to offer Bible courses and missions training in Spanish so that Hispanics might receive training to minister among their people in the American Southwest and throughout Latin America.⁴¹ She developed curriculum, wrote several books and numerous articles. Luce's school, now known as Latin American Bible Institute, is located in La Puente, California and continues its educational mission.

A contemporary of Luce was Henry C. Ball (1896-1989) who founded the Latin American Bible Institute in San Antonio, Texas in November 1926.⁴² As a result of these groundbreaking efforts, other Spanish language Bible schools have been founded in Texas, California, New York, Florida, and Puerto Rico.⁴³

The population of Native Americans has not been ignored as Bible schools have been formed to meet their specific spiritual and educational needs and interests. In 1957, Alta Mary Washburn (1906-1990) established the All Tribes Bible School in Phoenix, Arizona. Known today as American Indian College, it is the only regionally accredited, evangelical college serving Native American students.⁴⁴ One other post-

In many respects, these nontraditional approaches to ministry preparation are reminiscent of the Bible and missionary training schools existing during the earliest days of the Pentecostal revival.



Students outside the Health and Sciences Center at Northwest University, Kirkland, WA.

ment that exceeded 2,000 participants.³⁷

Another program of short-term ministry training are the "church-based Bible institutes" (CBBI). These training centers, often located in larger congregations, provide students an opportunity to learn under the tutelage of the pastoral staff. Students develop their ministry skills by putting their training into practice within the local church. In 2009, the AG reported the existence of 1,416 CBBI that trained 14,510 students.³⁸

A third ministry training program has emerged within the past ten years. Twenty-four districts, enrolling over 3,400 students, have established "Schools of Ministry" (DSOM) to provide clergy training resulting in the issuance of ministry credentials within one year.³⁹

Typically, DSOM classes are

selected pastors from across the state, this training program "seeks to integrate spiritual formation, relational learning, and academic achievement and provide a unique learning experience. Students will not only meet the educational requirements for obtaining ministerial credentials but are encouraged to develop the character and skill essential for effective ministry."⁴⁰

In many respects, these nontraditional approaches to ministry preparation are reminiscent of the Bible and missionary training schools existing during the earliest days of the Pentecostal revival.

Specialized Training for Specific People Groups

Some educators recognized the need for Bible school training tailored to specific ethnic populations. Alice E. Luce (1873-1955) established

secondary institution serving Native Americans was founded in 1968 by Pauline Mastries, Charles Hadden, and Hubert Boese as Eastern Indian Bible Institute. The current name is Native American Bible College at Shannon, North Carolina.⁴⁵

Finally, several AG schools have been forerunners in providing education for students with hearing impairments. In 1969, North Central University launched the Carlstrom Deaf Studies program, which is currently the “only fully self-contained degree granting program for the deaf among AG institutions.”⁴⁶ Central Bible College and Zion Bible College also provide educational opportunities for persons within the deaf community.

Advances in Distance Education

Assemblies of God educators have long recognized the difficulties of attending residential colleges. Consequently, they have offered a variety of distance education options, including correspondence courses, extension sites, and online degree programs.

Correspondence Courses

As early as 1914, a series of “Home Bible Studies” were made available from the Gospel Publishing House, founded by T. K. Leonard, superintendent of The Gospel School. These studies of the entire Bible could be completed in one year.⁴⁷ In 1926, Central Bible Institute offered a series of seven courses on the Old Testament, New Testament, Dispensational Studies, Prophecy, Life of Christ, Pauline Epistles, and Evangelism. Each course could be completed in eight to twenty-four months and cost between \$6.00 and \$12.00.⁴⁸ In 1947, Southwestern Bible Institute made its Spanish and French language courses available for corre-



Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, MO.

spondence students.⁴⁹ The following year, the General Council announced the establishment of a Correspondence School, under the direction of Frank M. Boyd, called the Berean School of the Bible.⁵⁰ Over the next fifty years more than 40,000 students enrolled in these courses. This correspondence school eventually began offering col-

Correspondence Institute (ICI) to form Global University.⁵¹ At various times in their history, several AG universities have also offered correspondence courses, including North Central University, Southeastern University, and Southwestern Assemblies of God University.

Extension Sites

Recognizing the limitations of correspondence education, Central Bible Institute established an extension program in Detroit, Michigan in 1962 offering classroom instruction leading to the Associate of Arts degree.⁵² Central Bible College also has extension sites at Grand Rapids, Michigan and Ozark, Missouri (James River Leadership College). Other CBC extension sites were briefly operated in Memphis, Tennessee; Denver, Colorado; and Little Rock, Arkansas. Presently, two institutions have extension campuses that offer associate and bachelor’s degrees: Northwest University in Salem, Oregon and Valley Forge Christian College in Woodbridge, Virginia.⁵³ Graduate education is offered by the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary on eight branch campuses.⁵⁴

Online Education

Recent advances in technology make it possible for students



American Indian College, Phoenix, AZ.

lege credit courses and was renamed Berean College and then Berean University. In 1999, Berean University merged with the International



Lowell Lundstrom Heartland Student Life Center at Trinity Bible College, Ellendale, ND.

to earn a college degree by studying via the internet. Using software such as Blackboard, eCollege, Angel and similar programs, students can view classroom lectures, participate in discussion boards, conduct research, access library holdings and submit assignments. Various degree programs may be earned online at Bethany University, Central Bible College, Southeastern University, Southwestern Assemblies of God University, Trinity Bible College, and Valley Forge Christian College.⁵⁵ Global University also offers college courses online which include a digital library of resources.

Conclusion

The purpose of Pentecostal higher education, D. W. Kerr wrote in 1922, is “to cause people to get God’s viewpoint of things and to impart the same to others. In other words, [an Assemblies of God school] may be defined as a place where one may learn to think, speak, live, work and die scripturally.”⁵⁶ The AG presently endorses nineteen institutions of higher education, with a combined enrollment of 16,277 students in the fall of 2009.⁵⁷

The story of AG higher education is one of visionary, entrepreneurial, Spirit-filled educators who have raised up in each new generation, Pentecostal leaders for the church, community and the world. The lasting testimony to

their faith and commitment to education can be found in the institutions they established. ✠



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²⁵John Mostert, *The AABC Story: Forty Years with the American Association of Bible Colleges* (Fayetteville, AR: American Association of Bible Colleges, 1986), 13-43, 159-160.

²⁶Bob Dylan, "The Times They Are a-Changin'." Copyright 1963; renewed 1991 Special Rider Music.

²⁷Donald Paul Gray, "A Critical Analysis of the Academic Evolutionary Development Within the Assemblies of God Higher Education Movement, 1914-1975" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1976), 93, 116-119.

²⁸Among the nine largest and oldest Bible schools – Bethany, Central, North Central, Northwest, Southeastern, Southwestern, Trinity, Valley Forge, and Vanguard – only Central Bible College and Trinity have retained accreditation with both the Association of Biblical Higher Education and its regional accreditation association.

²⁹There are a few exceptions. Central Bible College and North Central University retain a 30-credit Bible core for all majors.

³⁰The Alliance for Assemblies of God Higher Education (AAGHE) is an agency established by the General Council "for the purpose of reviewing, evaluating, and endorsing Assemblies of God institutions of higher learning at the institute, baccalaureate, and graduate level. The endorsement process is intended to facilitate the development of educational institutions that are committed to the mission of the Church, the integration of faith and learning in the Pentecostal tradition, and academic excellence." See "The Alliance for AG Higher Education, Endorsement Criteria and Procedural Manual," (Springfield, MO: General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2005), 1.

³¹These historic Assemblies of God Bible colleges have so changed their names: Bethany, Eastern (Valley Forge Christian College, not University), North Central, Northwest, Southeastern, Southern California (Vanguard), and Southwestern. North Central University, however, continues to require 30 credits of Bible and theology for all students, regardless

of their major.

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⁴⁴Joseph J. Saggio, "Alta M. Washburn: 'Trailblazer' to the Tribes," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 27 (2007): 28-33.

⁴⁵Good Shepherd Indian Bible Institute in Mobridge, South Dakota was founded in 1970 by Leo and Mildred Bankson (later renamed Central Indian Bible College and then Black Hills Indian Bible College in Rapid City, South Dakota). Its successor is the Institute for Ministry Development, an intercultural distance-education program for Native Americans. Far North Bible College in Anchorage, Alaska was established in 1962 through the efforts of Arvin and Luana Glandon along with Kenneth Andrus. This school closed

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⁴⁶"North Central University — Carlstrom Deaf Studies," <http://www.northcentral.edu/academics/departments/carlstrom-deaf-studies> (accessed December 6, 2010).

⁴⁷*General Council Minutes*, April 1914, 14-15.

⁴⁸"Home Bible Study Opportunity," *Pentecostal Evangel*, May 7, 1927, 13.

⁴⁹"Language Instruction By Mail," *Pentecostal Evangel*, August 9, 1947, 15.

⁵⁰"Your Correspondence School," *Pentecostal Evangel*, September 4, 1948, 11

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⁵⁷"AG Endorsed Higher Education Institutions' Enrollment — 2000-2009," (Springfield, MO: General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2010).



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The Apostolic Faith Movement

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W. F. Carothers
Field ^{State} Director.
Aug 26th 1906

Chas. F. Parkman
Projector.

From Infidel to Christ: Howard A. Goss

By Robin Johnston

Howard A. Goss was one of the key figures in the emerging Pentecostal revival in America one hundred years ago. Goss, a self-described “infidel” in his youth, was an early convert of Charles F. Parham. He quickly became a leader in Parham’s Apostolic Faith Movement and was one of the organizers of the Assemblies of God (AG) in 1914. After embracing the Oneness movement, he left the AG in 1916. He ultimately became one of the founding fathers of the United Pentecostal Church International, which was formed in 1945.

Goss wielded significant influence on the young AG. According to historian Carl Brumback, Goss was “the man who was chiefly responsible for the Hot Springs Council.” Brumback also noted, significantly, that Goss did this when he “was only thirty years old, but already a Pentecostal veteran.”¹ After Goss’s departure, his colorful testimony became a distant memory for many in the AG. This article resurrects those memories, reintroducing readers to the testimony of one of the founders of the AG. Included here are stories from his childhood, conversion, and ministry through 1906.

Childhood

Howard Archibald Goss was born on March 6, 1883, to William Clinton Goss and Margaret Jane (Gillette) Goss on a farm near Steelville in Crawford County, Missouri.² Clinton, as he was known, and Margaret had eleven children, nine boys and two girls.³

Howard Goss was convinced his childhood developed in him a strong work ethic that remained throughout his life. He learned a number of lessons on the farm. On one occasion his father sent Howard and his younger brother Bryl to plant a field with corn. The boys were not paying close attention to the task and they spilled the corn on the ground. Deciding it was too much work to pick up the spilled corn, they covered it with dirt. When the corn sprouted it revealed their laziness and the punishment meted out by his father taught young Howard a lesson he remembered throughout his life: Be sure your sins will find you out.

In spite of the hard work, he remembered his childhood

with fondness. In his hindsight it was a “boy’s paradise,” the forests filled with wild game and the clear swift streams teeming with fish.⁴

As a fifteen-year-old, Howard moved from the wooded hills of the Ozarks to the tri-state region where Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma met. His father, perhaps enticed by the promise of great opportunity in the mining business, sold the family farm and invested in a mining venture in Galena, Kansas. His new home, Galena, had all the trappings of a frontier mining boomtown.

Galena exhibited the best and the worst of frontier mining towns. At its best it afforded an opportunity by capital investment or abundant employment to get ahead financially. At its worst it demonstrated the depths to which humans so often fall. Tent cities sprang up and life seemed about as secure as the tents. Howard remembered the insecure nature of the city:

Rough men came from every direction, riding or driving through the deep mud or dust, whichever for the moment made up the newly laid-out streets. They drank, gambled, shot, fought or killed each other as they pleased. Largely making their own laws, they went their own ways, and worked in the mines when they felt like it, or when they ran out of money and were compelled to. In the business section almost every other building housed a saloon with brothels sandwiched in between.⁵

Clinton Goss had seen Galena as an opportunity to better his family financially. Unfortunately his gamble quickly failed, and the family lost its financial stake. As a result of this swift reversal, Howard himself became a miner. His first mining job was to replace a miner who had been killed on the job the previous day. His early jobs were underground, and through a series of accidents that almost cost him his life, he came face to face with his mortality. His near-death experiences unsettled his young heart and perhaps laid the groundwork for not-too-distant religious conversion.

He soon secured an above-ground job in the mining industry, and by the time he was nineteen, management

thought he had potential for advancement and presented him with an opportunity. The opportunity was conditional on Howard graduating from high school, and so to prepare himself, he returned to high school.⁶

Introduction to Pentecostalism

High school presented Howard with a number of new opportunities in addition to his education. He was a gifted athlete and soon was both boxing and playing on the football team. While he benefited from both his educational and athletic opportunities, it was in high school where he received a personal invitation to visit the revival services of Charles Parham, and that visit changed the trajectory of Goss's life.⁷

Galena was an unlikely place to experience a religious conversion. The tri-state area around Galena was not known for its religious affection. In fact, the opposite was true. With little exaggeration a local poet wrote the following of nearby Joplin, Missouri:

Suez was still east of us and there were no Ten Commandments, for way down yonder in Southwest Missouri, where women drink and curse like fury; where the barkeepers sell the meanest liquor which makes a white man sick and sicker, where the tin horns rob you a little quicker, that's where Joplin is.⁸

Howard claimed little or no religious background. His grandfather, Larkin Goss, had converted and joined the Methodist Church in 1857.⁹ While the extent of Larkin's faith or his involvement with the Methodist church is unknown, evidently his son Clinton did not share his faith.

Although Howard's mother was a "staunch Christian and a leader of

the women's work of our church," he remembered his home as non-Christian. At some level there is a contradiction in Howard's recollection. His mother, in his words, was a staunch Christian and church member at least as early as 1901, and yet Howard said that he was the first in his family to find the Lord.¹⁰

Howard recalled the lack of faith in his childhood home:

None of us were Christians at this time. Far from it. We never had a Bible story told to us. We never read a Bible, attended a Sunday School, or a church on our lives. God was completely ignored in our home. Once my Mother told me that I could never be a truly educated man unless I had read at least some portions of the Bible. To please her I got a Bible and asked her where to read. She said anywhere she supposed. I opened at Matthew and after reading the first chapter through, I remarked: "Well, if it is all like this, I do not want to read anymore of it." She never mentioned it again. Consequently I grew up quite free from the doubts, unbelief and erroneous ideas which plague many a church member ... even today.¹¹

When Goss said he was the first in his family to find the Lord, he meant he was the first of his siblings. John, his elder brother, was a committed "infidel." He had been influenced by the writings of Thomas Paine, Voltaire, and Robert Ingersoll and was eager to pass his "radical ideas" on to his brothers. While most of his brothers did not share John's commitment to agnosticism, they were apathetic about matters of faith. John thought Howard had the most promise in this area and on his deathbed — he died at twenty-one — he urged Howard to

hold on to infidelity.¹²

While it is impossible to know with certainty the state of Howard's religious upbringing, it is safe to say that in no way did he consider himself to be a Christian. He did, however, consider himself and his brothers to be upstanding citizens not touched by the wickedness of the city in which they lived.

Conversion

In the fall of 1903 Galena was turned on its head by a series of revival meetings. Mary Arthur, the wife of a prominent merchant in Galena, had been healed under the ministry of Charles Parham the previous summer in El Dorado Springs, Missouri.¹³ Mrs. Arthur returned to Galena ecstatic about her healing and invited Parham to hold services in her home.

Parham's revival in Galena had gathered momentum and although the Arthur residence was in Sarah Parham's words "large and commodious," it was soon too small for the crowds who wished to attend.¹⁴ The meeting moved to a tent erected on a nearby vacant lot and, as winter set in, to the Grand Leader Building. Crowds flocked to the twice-a-day meetings seeking healing and the baptism in the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

Howard Goss, drawn by the healings and tongues-speech, was among the many who attended the meetings. He was particularly moved by watching an old Indian chief receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Tall and straight as an arrow, this old chief stood tilted rigidly backwards, yet maintained his upright position by balancing himself on the edge of his heels without any support. While he was praising God with uplifted hands, his body trembled rhythmically as if shaken by some great machine.



An Apostolic Faith gathering at Brunner Tabernacle, Houston, TX in 1906. Howard Goss is standing on the right of the first row.

This inflexible position he did not vary or relax in the slightest degree for over an hour. Then he began to speak in a strange language.

Unusually strong as I was, I knew that it was beyond ordinary human power to perform this feat, or many of the other things which I saw take place before my eyes. But this was the incident that finally capped my decision that there existed somewhere a Power higher than man. As I watched and cautiously listened further, I soon became fully convinced that there was a Supreme Being, and that His power was at work in our town.¹⁶

Mary Arthur's sister, who taught in the local high school where Howard was a student, challenged him to surrender his life to the Lord. It was the first time anyone had ever spoken to him about the condition of his soul. The next night Howard went to the altar to seek the Lord.

I sought God every night for about two weeks and so far as I could tell no change of heart took place. But I persisted, for I had wholly given myself up to God and now wanted Christianity to be my entire way of life. Finally one night I physically felt my sins go from me and I knew within my heart that I was forgiven and pardoned.¹⁷

On a cold winter day Charles Parham baptized about one hundred

converts from the Galena revival in the Spring River. Howard Goss was among that hundred. At this juncture in his ministry, Parham was baptizing converts in Jesus' name and Goss remembered being baptized in this manner.¹⁸

Goss's life changed radically following his conversion. Parham taught the need for a "clean holy life of victory for all believers" and promised that obedience to biblical principles brought an abundant life. This understanding of the blessings of obedience to biblical teaching would continue to shape the contours of Goss's life.

He replaced his involvement in sports with church activities and resigned from the two secret lodges

Goss's life changed radically following his conversion.

to which he belonged.¹⁹ When his season of schooling was completed, he returned to work in the mines but his passion had changed. Thoughts of promotions and material success had been replaced by his Christian devotion. For Grant Wacker this was evidence of the "relentless heaven-mindedness" characteristic of early Pentecostals.²⁰ Goss now spent his spare time studying the Bible. He later reflected that this time in Galena in intense study of the Bible

prepared him for a future ministry of Bible teaching.²¹

The Galena revival lasted until the end of January 1904. Parham used the interest stirred by this revival to reach out to other communities in the tri-state region. In February, he opened a series of meetings in nearby Baxter Springs and, by any measure, the revival was successful. Nearly one quarter of the town converted and Baxter Springs became the base of his operations. Down the road about twelve miles in Melrose, another revival meeting led to the construction of the first church structure built for a Pentecostal congregation.²² Like many early Pentecostals, Goss attended these revival services nearly every night.²³

Mary Arthur and her friend Francene Dobson founded a permanent Apostolic Faith mission in Galena, and it became Goss's home assembly.²⁴ He helped the assembly in any way he could. Yet, Goss felt God was calling him into a more active participation and, in the fall of 1905, he embarked for Texas and a new phase of his life.

Early Apostolic Faith Ministry

In September 1905, the young Goss left his job in the mines of Galena, sold his horse, rig, and everything else he had, and joined a group of Apostolic Faith workers who were on their way to Texas. Starting "with my pockets empty of money, but my heart brimful of zeal and courage for the Lord," he embarked on a ministerial path that would propel him into leadership in multiple Pentecostal organizations.²⁵ Soon he was intimately involved in the rapidly expanding Apostolic Faith work in Texas.

Goss accompanied a band of workers to Alvin, Texas, in the late fall of 1905. They opened meetings in the

Opera House but soon outgrew it and moved into an abandoned storage building. A number of young converts from Alvin went on to become involved in gospel work, among them Millicent McClendon, who would become Goss's wife and fellow evangelist.²⁶

A second band had gone on to Galveston. In Goss's words, "Galveston was a very wicked place. At the time; it was full of spiritualists and many other spirits of evil."²⁷ The band of workers in Galveston was meeting severe resistance so Parham dispatched a fresh group of workers to assist them. As part of this reorganization, Goss was reassigned from Alvin to Galveston.

The difficulties continued. Although money was extremely scarce, Parham insisted that his workers take no public offerings. They were permitted to mention how their work was financed but they could not make an appeal for an offering. They lived by "faith" and they felt that God provided, even if it was not exactly as they wished.

Just before the end of the year, Parham recalled Goss and the other workers to Houston for a short-term Bible school. Classes and nightly meetings convened in Caledonia Hall and the workers were housed at 503 Rusk Avenue.²⁸ Classes were often held at the Rusk Avenue home as well.

He and his fellow students followed a punishing schedule although Goss never hinted at being tired in his diary. Perhaps it was not mentioned because Goss was young and possessed boundless energy. Maybe it was because it was not considered spiritual to recognize weariness. On an almost daily schedule, students attended class in the morning, held services at the Southern Pacific Railroad shops at noon, held street services in the afternoon, attended perhaps another

class late in the afternoon and then conducted as many as two services at Caledonia Hall in the evening. This was on top of sharing in the household chores.²⁹

The schedule did not get much lighter when the school term ended. Goss was in some type of a church service every day of 1906 until June 27 when he missed a night due to moving from one mission station to establish a new one.³⁰ He often visited the local Methodist Sunday school when he was not engaged in an Apostolic Faith meeting on Sunday morning. This full schedule set the tone for these early years of ministry and demonstrated the passion Goss and other young converts had for the work of the Lord.

However, life not only focused on things spiritual. On one occasion Parham thought it wise to lecture



Newlyweds Howard and Ethel Goss

on courtship. Goss recalled that he "skinned the students" when addressing this issue.³¹ Evidently the busy young workers had enough free time to develop romantic friendships with each other.

When the school term ended the workers spread out to towns around Houston. On February 15, Goss went

out with a band of workers to open a new work in Wallis. He stayed in Wallis a short while and then became the leader of a band assigned to Angleton.

This was his first leadership assignment. He was twenty-two years old and as of yet had not received the baptism in the Holy Ghost. The train was the primary mode of transportation for the workers, and when going south from Houston, it passed through the small town of Alvin. Goss took every opportunity to stop there because a young evangelist, Millicent McClendon, had caught his eye, and she was from Alvin.

The Angleton campaign, although not without some initial difficulties, proved to be successful. Money was tight — on one occasion the band of workers went without food for three days. At first the town resisted the new movement but when a prominent Baptist deacon, Addison Mercer, became the first convert the tide turned.³² Goss shared the preaching duties with Anna Hall — in fact she preached more than he did.

This openness to women preachers was characteristic of early Pentecostalism in general and of Howard Goss in particular. From his initial exposure to Pentecostalism, Goss was associated with women ministers. They included Mary Arthur, the first pastor of his home assembly in Galena³³ and Sarah Parham and her sister Lilian Thistlewaite, key members of Charles Parham's inner circle. Goss's first wife, Millicent, was an outstanding evangelist as was his second wife, Ethel Wright. During the course of his ministry it was not uncommon for Millicent, and after she died, Ethel, to preach the evening evangelistic service while Howard would have been the daytime Bible teacher.³⁴

Early in April, Parham called his workers to Orchard for a convention

over the Easter weekend. Goss went determined to receive the baptism in the Holy Ghost.³⁵ The services were intense — one lasted for eighteen hours.³⁶ However, the convention closed with Goss disappointed that he still had not received the baptism in the Spirit.

The excitement of the weekend lingered as the workers waited at the train station for transportation back to their respective fields. The train was delayed so Parham used the opportunity for one more service. When the train finally arrived the workers boarded it with worship still lingering in their hearts. It was on this train ride that Goss finally became fully Pentecostal. He and twelve others received the baptism in the Spirit and began to speak in other tongues. In Goss's words, "What a time we all had in the Lord! What a train ride!"

When the train arrived back in Angleton, Goss and his fellow workers exited the train spiritually "drunk." The town, curious about this unorthodox behavior, filled the tent to hear and see the spectacle. Goss, who was to preach, was unable to speak English and soon gave up on his attempt to preach and motioned for people to come to the front of the tent. The crowd rushed forward and many received the baptism in the Spirit. Goss later declared that he had never been in a meeting like this before or since.³⁷ He was so caught up in his new experience that it was days before he could converse intelligibly in English.

The revival in Angleton continued throughout the spring. Occasionally Parham or W. F. Carothers would come down from Houston to check on the progress of the work. Goss helped construct a large brush arbor that became the primary meeting place for the revival. During the first part of May, he scouted out the towns of Brazoria and Columbia as possible



First executive presbytery of the AG in front of a stone wall at the first General Council in Hot Springs, Arkansas, April 12, 1914. Seated in front (l-r): T. K. Leonard, E. N. Bell, and Cyrus Fockler. Standing in back (l-r): J. W. Welch, J. Roswell Flower, D. C. O. Opperman, Howard Goss, and M. M. Pinson.

new locations for outreach. On May 15, Goss relocated to Brazoria and opened a campaign.³⁸ While not as successful as the Angleton campaign, another beachhead had been established for the Apostolic Faith movement.

On occasion Goss would preach at the local African-American church. His diaries, however, give no indication of any interracial gathering. The interracial impulse of the Azusa Street revival did not play a significant role, if any at all, in the Texas Apostolic Faith movement. Nevertheless, an African-American female preacher did play a significant role in Howard's life. After his initial baptism in the Spirit, Goss was unable to break through to tongues again. On August 14, he was in Houston working at Brunner Tabernacle when Lucy Farrow, an African-American preacher who had just returned from the Azusa Street revival, prayed for him and he spoke in tongues again. From that time forward he was "able to speak in tongues at any time I yielded to the Spirit of God."³⁹

In August the Apostolic Faith workers convened once again in Houston. A tabernacle had been erected in the suburb of Brunner, and attempts were made to begin to establish some kind

of an organizational structure. Parham was appointed the "Projector" of the Apostolic Faith, Carothers the general field director, and Howard Goss the field director for the State of Texas. Goss was also ordained at this camp meeting.⁴⁰ Although only twenty-three when he was appointed field director, he was a trusted member of Parham's young group and was already showing a gift for organization.⁴¹ In spite of all the church activity, Goss also was able to pursue a romantic interest. On the day the camp closed, he proposed to Millicent McClendon, and she accepted.⁴²

For the remainder of 1906 Goss traveled throughout Texas, both to encourage established works and to open works in new towns. At that time there were about sixty workers in the state.⁴³ In a notation added to the end of his 1906 diary, Goss recorded that he traveled 4,278 miles on the railroad that year.⁴⁴ At age 23, Goss was indeed busy promoting and consolidating the Apostolic Faith movement.

Summary of Goss's Ministry after 1906

By the summer of 1907, Goss and the majority of the Apostolic Faith movement broke with Parham, who had experienced several setbacks over

the past year. The Texas Apostolic Faith leaders, including Carothers and Goss, had been chafing at Parham's authoritarian leadership.

Parham's authority was also diminished when he repudiated the Azusa Street revival, led by his former student, William Seymour, partly because he did not like the African-American forms of worship. Finally, a widely-publicized scandal concerning a possible homosexual relationship involving Parham resulted in the departure of most of his followers.⁴⁵ It was a time of great discouragement, yet the young movement, now led by Goss and others, soon rebounded and began to experience expansion once again.

In the fall of 1909, Goss settled in Malvern, a small town just outside of Hot Springs, Arkansas. Howard and Millicent Goss had great success in Malvern. They established a flourishing assembly (now First Assembly of God), one of the largest of the time. By the end of the year, 152 people had "received Pentecost."⁴⁶

During this time when Malvern was Goss's focal point, while attending a 1909 camp meeting in Houston, Texas, he met Eudorus Neander Bell, a former Baptist pastor from Fort Worth who had recently embraced Pentecostalism.⁴⁷ Bell became a close associate of Goss's and, twenty years his senior, became quite influential in Goss's life. E. N. Bell succeeded Goss as pastor of the Malvern church. Bell also took over editing the *Apostolic Faith* periodical from Goss, ultimately merging it with the *Word and Witness*, an early Pentecostal publication primarily circulated in the southeastern states by a group led by M. M. Pinson and H. G. Rodgers.⁴⁸

Goss traveled extensively, holding tent revivals in south central states. His wife, Millicent, died while giving childbirth in August 1910. He

remarried on September 29, 1911, to Ethel Wright, the Pentecostal pastor in Howard's hometown of Galena. They took their gospel tent to Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1912 and settled there as pastor.

As he traveled, Goss became increasingly convinced of the need for a more structured organization if the work were to be preserved. He understood an organization to be a group of people united for the same purpose and was sure that this was both necessary and in keeping with the restoration impulse of the movement.⁴⁹ In *The Winds of God*, he outlined his conclusion as follows: "Thus from the Acts of the Apostles and our own experiences, I was led to see that Spirit-filled people needed some restraint, just as a horse needs harness to produce worthwhile results; that a simple legal form of written co-operative fellowship ... was imperative, and God's form for us, as well."⁵⁰

Goss understood that early Pentecostals did not have "any wish for a 'hide-bound' organization, the usual term for any degree of ecclesiasticism," but "there seemed no satisfactory substitute" for at least some kind of an organization.⁵¹ He had come to this conclusion carefully, not wanting "to grieve or to displease the Lord."⁵² Goss was not alone in his concerns, and his conclusions were shared by Bell and a number of other leaders of the loosely affiliated ministers and assemblies.⁵³

In response to this perceived need, the December 20, 1913, issue of *Word and Witness* contained a call for an exploratory meeting for a new organization to be held in April 1914 in Hot Springs, Arkansas. The call was signed by Goss, along with Bell, M. M. Pinson, Arch Collins, and D. C. O. Opperman. The meeting convened as planned in April 1914, and the Grand Opera House of Hot Springs became

the birthplace of the AG.

Given the concerns many early Pentecostals had relative to church organizations, the General Council of the Assemblies of God, as it became officially known, was loosely structured.⁵⁴ Out of this successful organizational meeting came the largest Pentecostal fellowship in North America. Goss was appointed as one of the twelve presbyters and was charged with the oversight of issuing credentials to the western region of the fellowship.⁵⁵

One year later, in the summer of 1915, the AG was in turmoil over the "New Issue" — whether to reject the traditional Trinitarian baptismal formula in favor of baptizing "in the name of Jesus." E. N. Bell briefly advocated "Jesus name" baptism, and Goss asked Bell to rebaptize him in the name of Jesus at a camp meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas. When the New Issue expanded to reject the Trinitarian understanding of the godhead, Bell and Goss took divergent paths. Bell affirmed Trinitarian orthodoxy, while Goss accepted what he deemed to be new light on the godhead. In 1916, the AG adopted its Statement of Fundamental Truths, which included a Trinitarian understanding of the godhead. Bell remained Trinitarian and a leader in the AG until his death in 1923. Goss had become a committed Oneness leader and in 1945 helped to form the United Pentecostal Church International, an amalgamation of several earlier Oneness Pentecostal groups.

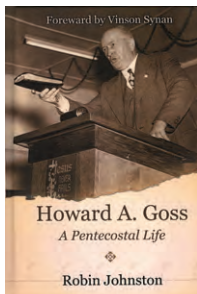
Howard Goss, one of the most significant figures of the early Pentecostal movement and a leader in several organizations, died on July 12, 1964, at the age of 80. The *Pentecostal Evangel* published a lengthy, gracious obituary stating that, despite theological differences, Goss was a "godly man" to whom "we owe a debt."⁵⁶ ❖



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NOTES

¹Carl Brumback, *Suddenly ... From Heaven: A History of the AG* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), 165.

²Margaret Goss, affidavit sworn on November 14, 1928, Howard Goss collection, The Center for the Study of Oneness Pentecostalism, Hazelwood, Missouri.

³For Howard's account of his family, see Ethel E. Goss, *The Winds of God: The Story of the Early Pentecostal Days (1901-1914) in the Life of Howard A. Goss* (New York: Comet Press Books, 1958), 1. Crawford County, Missouri, birth records indicate there were eleven children, nine who survived infancy.

⁴Goss, *Winds of God*, 1-4.

⁵Ibid., 9.

⁶Ibid., 7-8.

⁷Edith L. Blumhofer, *Pentecost in My Soul: Explorations in the Meaning of Pentecostal Experience in the Early AG* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 120 and Goss, *Winds of God*, 13.

⁸Arrell M. Gibson, "Lead Mining in Southwest Missouri After 1865," *Missouri Historical Review* 53 (July 1959): 325, quoted in James R. Goff, Jr., *Fields White Unto Harvest, : Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), 91.

⁹Ken Fiebleman, *Ozark Hills Friends and Neighbors, 1929-2000: East Central Missouri Ozarks*, Vol. 4 (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing Company, 2001), 171.

¹⁰She later converted to Pentecostalism along with Howard in Parham's revival.

¹¹Goss, *Winds of God*, 10.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Howard Goss dates this meeting in the fall of 1902. See Goss, *Winds of God*, 11. However, this seems to be mistaken. Most other accounts date the beginning of the Galena revival in the fall of 1903.

¹⁴Sarah E. Parham, *The Life of Charles Parham* (Joplin, MO: Tri-State Printing Co., 1930), 91.

¹⁵Ibid., 91-92.

¹⁶Goss, *Winds of God*, 12.

¹⁷Ibid., 13-14.

¹⁸Fred J. Foster, *Their Story: 20th Century Pentecostals*, Rev. ed. (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1981), 121. See also Charles F. Parham, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, Rev. ed. (Baxter Springs, KS: the author, 1910), 23-24.

¹⁹Goss, *Winds of God*, 15-16.

²⁰Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 19.

²¹Goss, *Winds of God*, 17.

²²Goff, 93.

²³Blumhofer, *Pentecost in My Soul*, 121.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Goss, *Winds of God*, 29.

²⁶Ibid., 30-31.

²⁷Ibid., 31.

²⁸Ibid., 34.

²⁹Goss diary, January 12, 1906, held at The Center for the Study of Oneness Pentecostalism, Hazelwood, Missouri. In his January 12 entry Goss mentions he cooked all day.

³⁰Goss diary, January 1, 1906 - June 27, 1906.

³¹Ibid., January 28, 1906.

³²Goss, *Winds of God*, 41-42.

³³Blumhofer, *Pentecost in My Soul*, 121-122.

³⁴This remained the practice decades later when Howard served as pastor in Toronto, Ontario; his wife, Ethel, regularly preached the evening evangelistic service. Ruth Goss Nortje, "Ethel Elizabeth Goss" in *Pioneer Pentecostal Women*, Volume 3, Mary Wallace, ed. (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2003), 63.

³⁵Goss, *Winds of God*, 42-43.

³⁶Goss diary, April 15, 1906.

³⁷Goss, *Winds of God*, 42-47.

³⁸Goss diary, May 1, 1906 - June 25, 1906.

³⁹Goss diary, August 14, 1906 and Goss, *Winds of God*, 56.

⁴⁰Goss, *Winds of God*, 56-57.

⁴¹Perhaps Goss's physical stature contributed to his success as a leader. Frequently when I asked those who knew Goss firsthand for recollections on him, they would mention his large stature and his frugal ways.

⁴²Goss diary, August 20, 1906. The Goss diary reveals that this relationship was not primarily a pragmatic decision on Howard's part to find a ministry partner. The diary is sprinkled with terms of endearment for Millicent.

⁴³Goss, *Winds of God*, 57.

⁴⁴Goss diary, 1906.

⁴⁵For a full treatment of these issues, see: Robin Johnston, *Howard A. Goss: A Pentecostal Life* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2010), 62-73.

⁴⁶Goss diary, December 26, 1909.

⁴⁷Goss diaries, 1908-1909. Goss, *Winds of God*, 122.

⁴⁸At a camp meeting in May 1911, Pinson and Bell decided to amalgamate their respective papers, Pinson's, *Word and Witness* and Bell's, *The Apostolic Faith* under the *Word and Witness* masthead. The group was moving away from calling itself the Apostolic Faith movement and the choice of name probably reflects this movement. See Edith L. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The AG, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 83-87. See also Goss, *Winds of God*, 122.

⁴⁹Howard Goss unpublished notes, Howard Goss Notes File, The Center for the Study of Oneness Pentecostalism.

⁵⁰Goss, *Winds of God*, 172.

⁵¹Ibid., 165.

⁵²Ibid., 164.

⁵³When the AG was formed in 1914, it included a number of ministers and assemblies that were still open to the Wesleyan Holiness understanding of sanctification. See Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*, 124-7, for a brief overview of the Holiness controversy within the brand new AG.

⁵⁴*General Council Minutes*, April 1914, 4.

⁵⁵In Goss's unpublished notes, he stated that Bell was elected the general superintendent and he (Goss) secretary.

⁵⁶"Howard A. Goss Called Home," *Pentecostal Evangel*, August 23, 1964, 31.

Lillian Trasher

(Continued from page 39)

A 100th anniversary edition of *Letters From Lillian* will be available April 1. Visit worldmissions.ag.org

NOTES

¹Lillian Trasher, *Letters from Lillian* (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions, 1983), 110.

²Jerome Beatty, "Nile Mother," *American Magazine*, July 1939, 55; Lester Sumrall, *Lillian Trasher: The Nile Mother* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1951); Beth Prim Howell, *Lady on a Donkey* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1960); *Letters from Lillian*; Janet and Geoff Bengé, *Lillian Trasher: The Greatest Wonder in Egypt* (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 2004).

³Other Christian traditions recognize Trasher's example. Interestingly, the Episcopal Church added Trasher to its liturgical calendar (calendar of saints) in 2009. This was part of an effort to recognize "holy men and women" from other Christian traditions (including the Southern Baptist Convention's Lottie Moon).

⁴U.S. Department of State, Report of the Death of an American Citizen, Lillian Trasher file, FPHC. However, she listed her birth date as September 28, 1887, on her 1919 application for endorsement as an Assemblies of God missionary. Lillian Trasher file, AGWM archives, Springfield, MO. Denominational documents used the September 27 birth date.

⁵Beatty, 56.

⁶Howell, 14-20.

⁷Howell, 22.

⁸For an unknown reason, Howell identified Perry as Myrtle Marker. Howell, 24-28. Trasher identifies Mattie Perry by name in her booklet, "The Birth of Assiout Orphanage or Why I Came to Egypt in 1910," FPHC.

⁹Howell, 44-49. According to historian Charles Conn, Trasher "was not a Church of God missionary, but was considered a product of the church." She was "closely associated with the work in Dahlonega, Georgia," was a frequent contributor to the *Church of God Evangel*, and received offerings from the Church of God. Charles Conn, *Like a Mighty Army Moves the Church of God, 1886-1955* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God Publishing House, 1955), 143-

144.

¹⁰While Asyut is the preferred transliteration for the town, I will use the spelling of Assiout when mentioning the Assiout Orphanage, as referenced by Lillian Trasher. For background on orphans, see Beth Baron, "Orphans and Abandoned Children in Modern Egypt," in *Between Missionaries and Dervishes: Interpreting Welfare in the Middle East*, ed. Nefissa Neguib and Inger Marie Okkenhaug (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 12-34.

¹¹Heather J. Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Presbyterian Missionaries and Muslim-Christian Encounters in an Age of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

¹²Lillian Trasher, *Word and Witness*, Oct. 20, 1913, 2.

¹³Muhafazat Asyut, *Asyut fi 10 Sanawat* (Cairo: Matba'at Nahdat Misr, 1962), 9.

¹⁴Lillian Trasher personal papers, FPHC; Lillian Trasher file, AGWM.

¹⁵Lillian Trasher, *Word and Witness*, Oct. 20, 1913, 2.

¹⁶Ghali Hanni, "Among the Natives in Egypt," *Latter Rain Evangel*, Oct. 1916, 4; Habeb Yousef, "The Pentecostal Work in Egypt," *Weekly Evangel*, March 3, 1917, p.13; idem, *Weekly Evangel*, May 19, 1917, 13.

¹⁷Lillian Trasher, "The Miracle of the Assiout Orphanage," *Latter Rain Evangel*, Aug. 1924, 22.

¹⁸Beth Baron, "The Politics of Female Notables in Postwar Egypt," in *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace, 1870-1930*, ed. Billie Melman (New York: Routledge, 1998), 332-333.

¹⁹"When God Called and Equipped," *Latter Rain Evangel*, March 1919, 15.

²⁰Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), chapters 5-7.

²¹Muhafazat Asyut: *al-'Id al-Qawmi*, April 18, 1982 (Cairo: Jumhuriyyat Misr al-'Arabiyya, al-Hay'a al-Amma lil-Isti`amlat, 1982), 7-8.

²²Lillian Trasher, "God's Protection Through a Reign of Terror," *Latter Rain Evangel*, Sept. 1919, 16.

²³Ibid.; "God's Protection in Great Peril," *Latter Rain Evangel*, June 1919, 11; "Alexandria, Egypt," *Christian Evangel*, June 28, 1919, 10.

²⁴"The Family Growing at Assiout," *Pentecostal Evangel*, July 18, 1925, 10.

²⁵Lillian Trasher, *Pentecostal Evangel*, April 2, 1921, 12.

²⁶Lillian Trasher personal papers, Waqf Document in Arabic and English translation,

FPHC.

²⁷Hanna F. Wissa, *Assiout — The Saga of an Egyptian Family*, (Sussex, England: Book Guild, 1994), 176; *Muhafazat Asyut*, map, 38..

²⁸Sumrall, *Lillian Trasher*, 22-23.

²⁹Lillian Trasher, *Pentecostal Evangel*, June 25, 1921, 13.

³⁰"The Assiout Orphanage," *Pentecostal Evangel*, Aug. 25, 1923, 12.

³¹Lillian Trasher, "Suffer the Little Children to Come," *Latter Rain Evangel*, Oct. 1919, 7.

³²Lillian Trasher personal papers, Waqf, FPHC.

³³"A Big Revival in Egypt," *Pentecostal Evangel*, March 27, 1926, 11.

³⁴Trasher, *Letters from Lillian*, letter dated June 23, 1933, 20.

³⁵*Al-Jihad* (July 3, 1933) in Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS), RG 209, Box 26, Folder 38.

³⁶*A Work of Faith and Labor of Love: the Assiout Orphanage, Assiout, Egypt* (Springfield, MO: Foreign Missions Dept., 1937), 19; *Letters from Lillian*, letter dated July 20, 1933, 22; "Officials Commend Assiout Orphanage," *Pentecostal Evangel*, August 26, 1933, 9.

³⁷*Al-Jihad* (July 10, 1933) in PHS, RG 209, Box 26, Folder 38.

³⁸*A Work of Faith*, 20; *Letters from Lillian*, 22-23.

³⁹Beatty, 55; Noel Perkin, "Down in Egypt," *Pentecostal Evangel*, May 1, 1937, 9-11.

⁴⁰Florence Christie, *Called to Egypt* (Wichita Falls, TX: Western Christian Foundation, 1997), 54.

⁴¹Samu'il Mishriqi, *Tarikh al-Madhab al-Khamsini fi Misr* (Cairo: al-Majma' al-'Amm li-Kana'is Allah al-Khamsiniyya, 1985).

⁴²Sumrall, 38.

⁴³Lillian Trasher, "'Growing Pains' at Assiut," *Pentecostal Evangel*, Dec. 2, 1951, 7.

⁴⁴*al-Ahram* (March 25, 1953); *al-Akhbar* (March 25, 1953); Lillian Trasher personal papers, scrapbook, FPHC; Christie, pp.142-43; "General Naguib's Visit to Assiut," *Pentecostal Evangel*, Feb. 13, 1955, 2.

⁴⁵Trasher, *Letters from Lillian*, letter dated Jan. 16, 1954, 92.

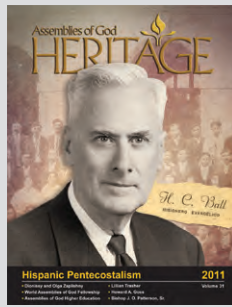
⁴⁶Lillian Trasher, "News from Lillian Trasher," *Pentecostal Evangel*, March 10, 1957, 23.

⁴⁷Lillian Trasher personal papers, Gamal Abdel Nasser to Lillian Trasher, Cairo, Oct. 13, 1959; Lill to Jen, Assiout, Oct. 20, 1959, FPHC.

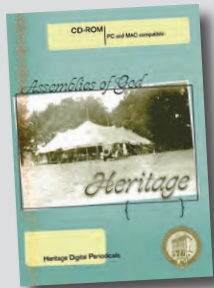
⁴⁸Raymond T. Brock, "Mother of a Thousand," *Pentecostal Evangel*, June 26, 1960, 11.

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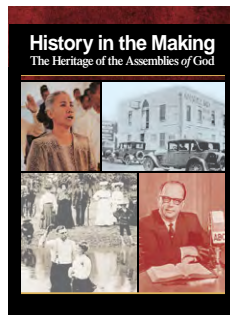
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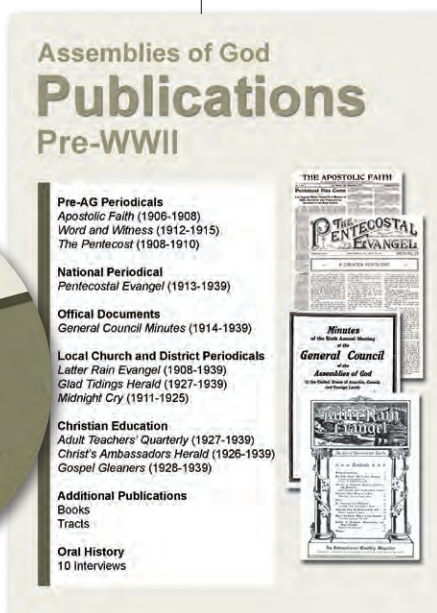
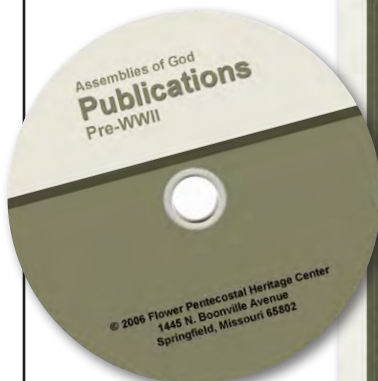
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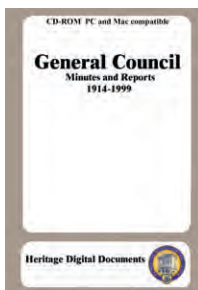
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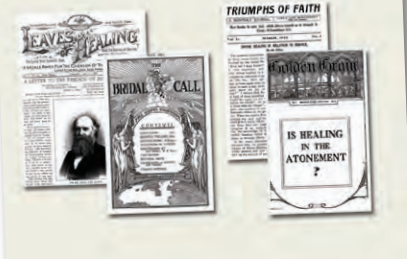
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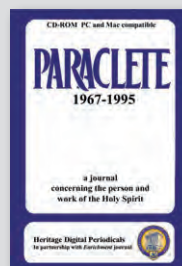
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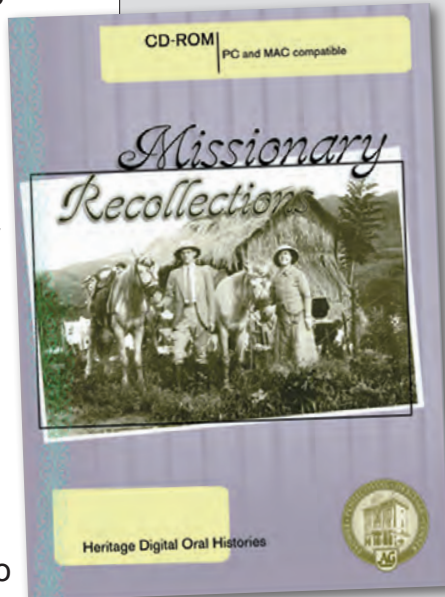
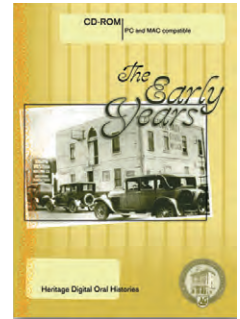
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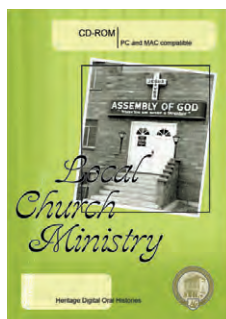
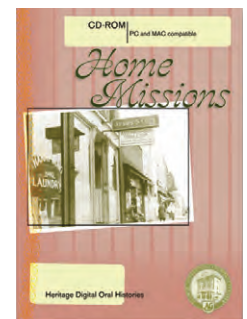
Hugh and Betty Baker, H. C. Ball, Ada Bolton Bard, Eva Bloom, Murray N. Brown, Sr., John H. Burgess, Alfred and Elizabeth Cawston, Charles Greenaway, Melvin L. Hodges, J. Philip Hogan, Maynard L. Ketcham, Howard C. Osgood, Everett L. Phillips, Harriet Williams Schoonmaker, Anna Stafsholt, Esther Harvey, Loren O. Triplett, Jr., Arthur Berg, Louise Jeter Walker, Anna Tomaseck, Valborg Frandsen, Adele Flower Dalton, Grace Walther and Marjorie Brown.

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Local Church Ministry

Today it is impossible to sit down and chat with Bond Bowman, James Hamill, Mary Ramsey Woodbury, and other early 20th century Pentecostal pastors. But it is possible to go with the interviewers and listen in on more than 10 hours of rare conversations with 12 leaders — representing ministries from coast to coast and border to border. You'll hear for the first time on MP3-CD how they were able to help build the Kingdom through their important roles within the Assemblies of God.

LCM MP3-CD **750474** \$ 20.00

Personal Papers of Bishop J. O. Patterson, Sr. Deposited at FPHC

The personal papers of J. O. Patterson, Sr. (1912-1989), former Presiding Bishop of the Church of God in Christ (1968-1989), have been deposited at the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center by his widow, Mother Mary P. Patterson. This major donation includes 10 linear feet of publications, correspondence, audio recordings, photographs, and other materials relating to Patterson and the church he led. The Church of God in Christ (COGIC) is the largest Pentecostal denomination in the United States.

Mother Patterson, in recent years, has taken on numerous historic preservation projects. Upon the request of Presiding Bishop Charles Blake, she developed the Legacy Room in the new John Lee Administrative Building in Memphis, Tennessee, which was dedicated on September 8, 2010. She previously assembled artifacts for COGIC historical exhibits in the former C. H. Mason home and at the Pink Palace, a history museum in Memphis, Tennessee.

Mother Patterson realized that the personal papers of her husband did not belong on display in a museum, but in an archive where they would be preserved and made accessible to researchers. However, the COGIC does not have a denominationally-sponsored archive, and much of its rich legacy has been obscured because historical materials are not accessible to historians. She made several inquiries and was told to contact the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, which is

the largest Pentecostal archives in the world.

After speaking with FPHC director Darrin Rodgers in November 2007, she traveled to Springfield to see the FPHC's facilities. COGIC National Archivist Dr. Odie Tolbert (a retired librarian from the University

worked to build bridges between the Church of God in Christ and other churches. I believe this could be a catalyst for significant bridge-building between our Pentecostal churches. God is bringing things together in a miraculous way.”

Rodgers shares a similar story. He



A delegation from the Church of God in Christ visited the FPHC in December 2007. (L-r): Sister Magnolia Tolbert, Darrin Rodgers (Director of the FPHC), Dr. Odie Tolbert (COGIC National Archivist), and Mother Mary P. Patterson, widow of former Presiding Bishop J. O. Patterson.

of Memphis) and his wife, Magnolia, accompanied her on the trip.

“I was amazed, not only by the professionalism and friendliness at the FPHC,” Patterson later remarked, “but also by the fact that everyone I met at the Assemblies of God Headquarters and at the schools wanted to pray with me.” She believed that the Lord opened up a door. “After my experience in Springfield, I knew that Bishop Patterson’s papers should be placed at the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.”

Mother Patterson believes that establishing the Bishop J. O. Patterson, Sr. Collection at the FPHC is part of a larger divine plan. “My husband

recalls that when he became FPHC director in 2005, “God impressed upon my heart that I needed to form relationships with leaders in the African-American Pentecostal community for the purpose of helping to preserve materials documenting their sacred stories.”

Patterson is excited about the broader implications of this archival relationship. She states, “I am entrusting the Assemblies of God to help preserve and promote my husband’s materials. I want to send a signal that our two churches can and should cooperate in areas like education and historical archives.” ❖

The Legacy of Bishop James O. Patterson, Sr.

By Harold Bennett

J. O. Patterson, Sr.'s influence on the Church of God in Christ was exceeded only by that of its founder, Charles H. Mason. "Partially because of Patterson's leadership," according to historian Ithiel Clemmons, the Church of God in Christ "grew into national and international prominence as a leading Christian denomination."¹

James Oglethorpe Patterson, Sr., was born July 21, 1912, in Derma Mississippi. He had four sisters, Argie, Alice, Retha, and Lillian, and one brother, William. He was educated in the public school system in Memphis, Tennessee, and received further training in religious studies at the Howe School of Religion, which later became a part of LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis, Tennessee.

In 1934, he married Deborah Indiana Mason, the fifth child born to Lelia Washington Mason and Bishop Charles H. Mason, founder of the COGIC. Deborah M. Patterson died in 1985, and in 1989, Bishop Patterson married Mary Peak Patterson.²

J. O. Patterson acknowledged his call to preach in 1932 and was ordained an Elder in the COGIC in 1935 by Bishop A. B. McEwen, Sr. Patterson pastored congregations in Gates, Brownsville, and Memphis, Tennessee, and he served a congregation in East Orange, New Jersey. In 1941, he became pastor of Woodlawn Church of God in Christ (now known as Pentecostal Temple Institutional Church of God in Christ), in Memphis, Tennessee. During his 48-year tenure,

the church grew in membership from fewer than twenty to more than three thousand. During this time, Patterson was also owner of the successful J. O. Patterson Funeral Home and was heavily involved in community activities. Church leaders noticed Patterson's spiritual leadership, business acumen, and ability to communicate.

In 1955, Bishop C. H. Mason elevated Patterson to the office of Bishop of the Second Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of Tennessee. When Mason created the Executive Committee to help carry out his



Bishop J. O. Patterson, Sr. speaking at Mason Temple Church of God in Christ, Memphis, TN, 1978. Courtesy Ernest C. Withers Foundation

administrative and executive duties, Patterson was appointed to serve on the committee's secretariat. Following Mason's death in 1961, the commit-

tee was renamed Executive Board and Patterson served on this board as Member-secretary. He also served as the COGIC General Secretary and oversaw the operations of the COGIC Publishing House. Patterson became the Presiding Bishop in 1968. He also served as Prelate of the Headquarters Jurisdiction in Memphis, Tennessee, from 1969 to 1981.

Bishop J. O. Patterson, Sr., a visionary leader, made lasting contributions to the life of the COGIC. Patterson chose Elder Roy L. H. Winbush, a young preacher with considerable administrative skills from Louisiana, to advance his program. This move proved very fruitful. The Pattersonian program impacted the COGIC in the following ways: 1) molding of a denominational identity; 2) development of a denominationally-owned publishing house; 3) institutionalization of educational initiatives; and 4) establishing relationships with other churches.³

Patterson transformed a large configuration of sanctified churches into a single, somewhat cohesive religious body. This shift was made possible through the publication of a new *Official Manual* (1973), which listed in one place the Articles of Religion, the new constitution, and guidelines for various types of worship services. Patterson also encouraged the adoption of common vestments and other liturgical practices. These helped create a national identity by helping persons understand what it meant to be

COGIC.

Patterson consolidated COGIC publishing efforts into a single denominationally-owned COGIC Publishing House. Patterson also established the COGIC Bookstore, a natural outgrowth of the COGIC Publishing House.

Patterson demonstrated a commitment to the life of the mind. He often said: "Get your learning, but don't lose your burning." He institutionalized support for theological education. Patterson spent considerable time and effort developing the C. H. Mason System of Bible Colleges and the Presiding Bishop's Dinner (now called COGIC Charities). It is noteworthy that the Charles H. Mason Theological Seminary, which opened in 1970 at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia, was a priority in Patterson's early administration.

Patterson integrated the COGIC

into the broader Christian community. He had an appreciation for the value of Pentecostalism and sought to display its merits to other religious denominations. Patterson made the COGIC a recognized feature on the African-American religious landscape. Patterson established the World Fellowship of Black Pentecostal Churches, and he positioned the COGIC to play roles in the Black Church Summit of the World Council of Churches and the Congress of National Black Churches.

Bishop J. O. Patterson, Sr. died on December 29, 1989, in Memphis, Tennessee.⁴ ✚



Harold Bennett (Ph.D., Vanderbilt University) is President of the Charles H. Mason Theological Seminary, Atlanta, Georgia.

NOTES

¹Ithiel C. Clemmons, *Bishop C. H. Mason and the Roots of the Church of God in Christ* (Bakersfield, CA: Pneuma Life Publishing, 1996), 127.

²Funeral program for J. O. Patterson, Sr., January 3, 1990, FPHC; Bobby Bean, *This is the Church of God in Christ* (Atlanta: Underground Epics Publishing, 2001), 178-182; Sherry Sherrod DuPree, *Biographical Dictionary of African-American, Holiness-Pentecostals: 1880-1990* (Washington, DC: Middle Atlantic Regional Press, 1989), 211. This essay also draws from: David D. Daniels, III, "'Live So God Can Use Me Anytime, Lord, Anywhere': Theological Education in the Church of God in Christ, 1970 to 1997," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3:2 (July 2000): 295-310; David Tucker, *Black Pastors and Leaders in Memphis: 1819-1972* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1975).

³Clemmons, 125-130.

⁴Obituary, *New York Times*, December 30, 1989.

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Confidence (Great Britain)
Congregational Holiness Church Discipline
Congregational Holiness Church Minutes
El Evangelio Pentecostal

La Luz Apostolica
Latter Rain Evangel (Chicago)
Minutes, Constitution and Bylaws (General Council AG)
The Pentecost
Pentecostal Evangel
Pentecostal Testimony (William Durham)
Refleks (Norway)
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Wort und Zeugnis

Additional titles coming soon!

The Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center website also features:

■ Searchable database listing over 79,000 records of treasures in the FPHC vault

■ Over 21,000 digitized photographs
■ Oral histories & video interviews

Make a difference!

Help the FPHC to share the story of the Assemblies of God

Do you ever wonder what the Assemblies of God will be like in years to come? You're not alone. That is why the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center aims to preserve and promote the heritage and distinct testimony of the Assemblies of God.

Do you remember C. M. Ward, Dan Betzer, and the Revivaltime choir? Was your life changed by a pastor, evangelist, missionary, church, or Teen Challenge center? God uses people, places and events to change the course of history — for individuals and for entire nations.

We in the Assemblies of God have a tremendous heritage! You and I know this, but many people have not had the opportunity to learn from the wisdom of those who came before.

There are four ways that you can help us to preserve and share our Pentecostal heritage with the next generation:

1 Entrusting us with materials from your life and ministry

The Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center is actively seeking the following materials related to your ministry and the worldwide Pentecostal movement:

- Magazines
- Sermons
- Photographs
- Diaries
- Interviews
- Scrapbooks
- Books
- Audiovisual Resources
- Memorabilia
- Newsletters
- Correspondence
- College Yearbooks
- Tracts
- Congregational Histories

Your contribution might be just what we need to fill gaps in one of our many collections.

2 Donating your used books

Direct your used books back into ministry by donating them to the Assemblies of God Used Book Clearinghouse.

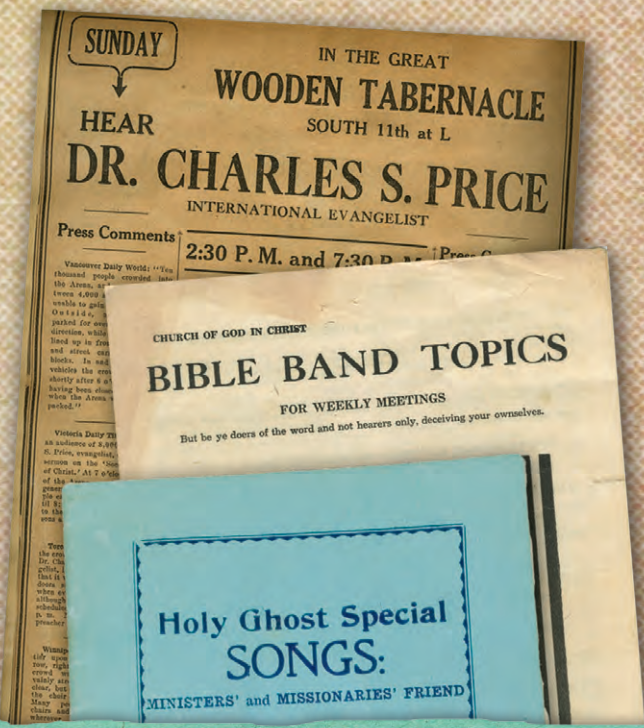
The Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center has always accepted donations of archival materials, including books, but sometimes people offer collections of books outside of the FPHC's collecting interests. Now, in conjunction with the libraries of AGTS, Central Bible College, and Evangel University, the FPHC is able to accept donations of personal libraries for the benefit of AG ministries. The archives or library which directs a donation to the Clearinghouse shall have first choice of materials from that donation. Remaining books will be made available by 4WRD Resource Distributors to missionaries, overseas Bible schools, individuals outside the U.S., and stateside non-profit organizations.

While all materials are accepted, the following are of particular interest:

1) Anything related to the Assemblies of God or the broader Pentecostal and charismatic movements, including books, tracts, pamphlets, magazines, unpublished manuscripts, audio recordings, video recordings, correspondence, scrapbooks, local church histories, and artifacts.

2) Any books religious in nature (including theology, church history, missions, biographies, commentaries, etc.).

3) Any academic books (in general, books with numerous footnotes or endnotes, or those published by university presses).



3 Supporting the Wayne Warner Research Fellowship

Wayne Warner, former director of the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center (1980-2005), is a familiar name across the Assemblies of God. Under his leadership, the Center became a leading Christian archives and developed one of the largest and most accessible collections of Pentecostal historical materials in the world. He was the founding editor of *Assemblies of God Heritage* and has authored or compiled eleven books and countless articles.



In October 2006, the leadership of the Assemblies of God established the Wayne Warner Research Fellowship, an endowed program designed to encourage faculty, independent researchers, and students to use and publish from the Center's rich holdings. The program will award research and travel grants to a limited number of researchers each year whose research concerning Assemblies of God history is likely to be published and to benefit our Fellowship.

Have you been encouraged by Wayne's writings or friendship? Do you appreciate our Assemblies of God heritage? By making a financial contribution to the Warner Fellowship, you will honor Wayne's significant contribution to the preservation and understanding of Assemblies of God history, and you will encourage scholarship in the field of Pentecostal history.

4 Contributing to the FPHC endowment

You may wish to consider making a financial contribution to the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center endowment to help ensure the long-term future of this ministry of remembrance. You can give needed support for the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center by making a gift of cash or property or simply by including the following words in your will:

I give, devise, and bequeath to the Assemblies of God Foundation, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802 (insert amount being given here) to be used to support the ministry of the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

Bequests are free of estate tax, and can substantially reduce the amount of your assets claimed by the government. A bequest can be a specific dollar amount, a specific piece of property, a percentage of an estate, or all or part of the residue of an estate. You can also name the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center as a contingency beneficiary in the event someone named in your will is no longer living. It is recommended that an attorney help in drafting or amending a will.

Please contact me if you would like to discuss how you can help us to preserve and share our Pentecostal heritage with future generations. Thank you for your dedication to God and to the Assemblies of God!

Darrin Rodgers

Darrin J. Rodgers, M.A., J.D.
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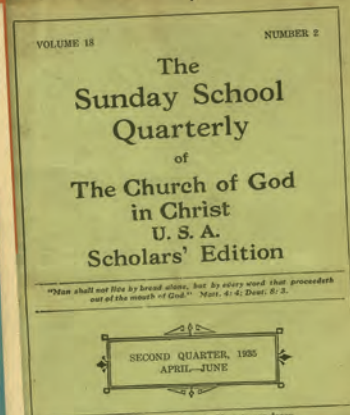
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