

Assemblies of God

# HERITAGE



**Evangelist Charles S. Price**

**2008**

- Teen Challenge
- Religious Life of Elvis
- Congregational Music
- Women in Ministry
- Racial Reconciliation
- *Plus Other Features*

**Volume 28**



# Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center



## Come Explore Assemblies of God History

The above exhibit, displaying William J. Seymour and other leaders in the Azusa Street revival, is part of the inspiring Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center Museum.

- **Museum Hours:** Open daily, Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- **Admission:** No admission fee. Free parking. Handicap accessible.
- **Tours:** Guided tours are available for interested groups.

Please contact us for further information:

**Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center**

1445 N. Boonville Avenue - Springfield, Missouri 65802

(417) 862-1447 ext. 4400 - E-mail us at [archives@ag.org](mailto:archives@ag.org)



Published annually by  
The Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center  
1445 N. Boonville Ave.  
Springfield, MO 65802-1894 USA  
Phone: 417-862-1447, ext. 4400  
Fax: 417-862-6203  
Toll Free: 877-840-5200  
Email: archives@ag.org  
Website: www.iFPHC.org  
ISSN 0896-4395

# Assemblies of God HERITAGE

2008

Vol. 28

PUBLISHED BY THE FLOWER PENTECOSTAL HERITAGE CENTER

*Darrin J. Rodgers*  
EDITOR AND DIRECTOR

*Joyce E. Lee*  
ARCHIVIST

*Glenn W. Gohr*  
REFERENCE ARCHIVIST AND COPY EDITOR

*William J. Molenaar*  
SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR

*Sharon L. Rasnake*  
ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR

*Randy Clute*  
HERITAGE DESIGNER

*Wayne E. Warner*  
FOUNDING EDITOR

Price: \$8.00

Heritage is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, published by the American Theological Library Association, 250 S. Wacker Dr., 16th Flr., Chicago, IL 60606  
E-mail: atla@atla.com  
Web: www.atla.com

ATLA Religion Database (RDB) is available on CD-ROM and US MARC format directly from ATLA, as well as online through five aggregators: OCLC's FirstSearch, EBSCO Information Services, SilverPlatter, Ovid Technologies, and Cambridge Scientific Abstracts. Microfilm of Heritage is available from Theological Research Exchange Network (TREN), P.O. Box 30183, 5420 N. E. Glisan, Portland, OR 97294-3183. *Heritage* on CD is available from the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

© Copyright 2008 by  
Gospel Publishing House,  
1445 N. Boonville Ave.,  
Springfield, MO 65802-1894

POSTMASTER: Send address  
change to *Heritage*, 1445 N. Boonville  
Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894



#### 4 Dr. Charles S. Price: His Life, Ministry and Influence

This Oxford-educated pastor became one of the most noteworthy Pentecostal evangelists of the twentieth century.

BY TIM ENLOE



#### 14 Teen Challenge: 50 Years of Miracles

What began as an outreach to the gangs of New York City has developed into one of the largest and most successful Christian drug-treatment programs.

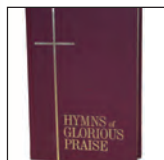
BY DAVID BATTY AND ETHAN CAMPBELL



#### 22 Conflicted by the Spirit: The Religious Life of Elvis Presley

The "King of Rock 'n Roll," the most famous Assemblies of God Sunday school prospect from the 1950s, experienced an all-too public struggle between his religious upbringing and the temptations of the world.

BY JAMES R. GOFF, JR.



#### 32 A Short History of Congregational Song in the Assemblies of God

The distinctive testimony of the Assemblies of God is reflected in its hymnody, which has evolved over the decades.

BY BODIE GILBERT



#### 40 Known and Yet Unknown: Women of Color and the Assemblies of God

Inspiring vignettes of women of color who have impacted the Assemblies of God, but whose stories are largely unknown.

BY JESSICA FAYE CARTER



#### 44 The Uphill History of Hispanic Assemblies of God Women in Ministry, 1915-1950

An examination of the origins and early history of Hispanic clergywomen in the Assemblies of God.

BY GASTÓN ESPINOSA



#### 50 The Assemblies of God and the Long Journey toward Racial Reconciliation

An analysis of the historical roots of racial unity and disunity in the Assemblies of God.

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

2 From the Editor 49 FPHC News 62 Heroes of the Faith  
67 Resources

Front cover: Evangelist Charles Price in a preaching pose. The crowd from his Edmonton, Alberta crusade, October 1923, can be seen in the background.

# Enduring Core Values

By Darrin J. Rodgers

**F**ashions and fads — in the broader society as well as in church — may come and go. However, history offers perspective about what lasts and what matters most. What lessons can be gleaned from the history of the Assemblies of God?

Reflecting back upon the spiritual pilgrimage of the Assemblies of God, General Superintendent George O. Wood identifies five enduring core values that its leadership has aimed to exemplify since its inception in 1914:

1. Passionate proclamation, at home and abroad, by word and deed of Jesus as Savior, Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, Healer, and Soon Coming King;
2. Strategic investment in the next generation;
3. Vigorous planting of new churches;
4. Skillful resourcing of our Fellowship; and
5. Fervent prayer for God's favor and help as we serve Him with pure hearts and noble purpose.

Focusing on these enduring core values has enabled the Assemblies of God to reach the world for Christ. When, in November 1914, the second General Council committed the Assemblies of God to labor toward

“the greatest evangelism that the world has ever seen,” such resolve must have seemed to some to be sheer audacity. In less than one century, though, this commitment has yielded results that hit shockingly close to the mark. In 2007, over 57 million people were associated with the World Assemblies of God Fellowship.

## Learning from Struggles

There is a danger, however, that these encouraging statistics will breed a sense of triumphalism. The believers who make up the Assemblies of God are to be commended for bringing millions to faith in Christ and for faithfully working to fulfill the Great Commission. However, Pentecostal history reveals a much more complex story — one in which testimonies of saved lives, restored families, and healed bodies are accompanied by stories of human frailty, sacrifice, and struggle.

Carl Brumback, in his 1961 history of the Assemblies of God, warned against forgetting the hard-won lessons of Pentecostal history:

We tend to glamorize the formative days of the Pentecostal Movement, to gloss over the objectionable features, and to dismiss as prejudice the criticisms that were leveled against it. We should be mature enough now to face the facts. To be objec-

tive, this history must consider the undesirable and often unmentioned traits that were only too apparent to those outside the Movement.<sup>1</sup>

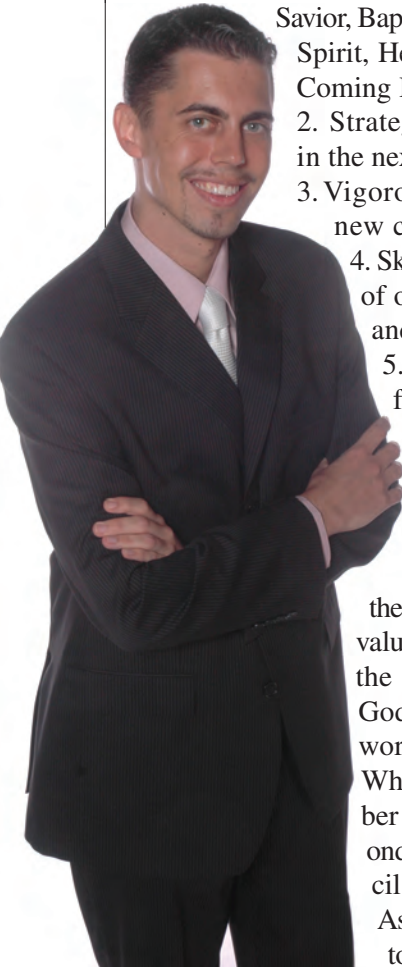
According to Brumback, shortcomings found in the early Pentecostal movement included: its impermanent status; doctrinal tangents; fanaticism; immoral persons; a superiority complex; and proselytizing fellow Christians.<sup>2</sup> One does not need to look beyond the past year's news headlines to see that these difficulties continue to exist in some Pentecostal circles — and in the broader church.

The Assemblies of God was formed precisely to address these problems — to provide doctrinal, financial, and moral accountability and to develop structures to serve the growing Pentecostal movement. The founders of the Assemblies of God gave a five-fold purpose for calling the first General Council: unity, conservation of the work, provision for missionaries, a legal charter for the churches, and creation of a “general Bible Training School with a literary department for our people.”<sup>3</sup> It was from this foundation that the Assemblies of God developed into what it is today.

## In This Issue

This issue of *Assemblies of God Heritage* showcases stories of people, ministries, and themes that illustrate some of the enduring core values identified by Dr. Wood. These stories will evoke memories for those who have lived the history. Hopefully, readers will be challenged to reflect not just about the triumphs of the faith life, but also about the snares that have prevented people from accomplishing God's will for their lives.

The feature article recounts the inspiring life of Charles S. Price, the Oxford-educated Congregational pas-



tor who scoffed at Pentecostals from his pulpit, until he converted to Christ in an evangelistic service held by Aimee Semple McPherson in 1920. He abandoned his theological modernism and became one of the most noteworthy Pentecostal evangelists of the twentieth century.

Next, you will read the exciting story of Teen Challenge, which is one of the largest and most successful Christian drug-treatment programs. The ministry, birthed fifty years ago by David Wilkerson as an outreach to the gangs of New York City, demonstrates that no person is beyond redemption.

The next two articles touch on music. Gospel music historian Jim Goff provides a careful assessment of Elvis Presley's religious confliction. *Assemblies of God* members have often felt mixed feelings toward the "King of Rock 'n Roll." Many liked his music and were proud that he once sat in the Sunday school at Memphis First Assembly of God. At the same time, Elvis' all-too-public struggles caused concern and, at times, consternation. Next, a history of congregational song in the *Assemblies of God* explores the development of the songbooks and hymnals with which we were raised. I encourage you to see how many you remember!

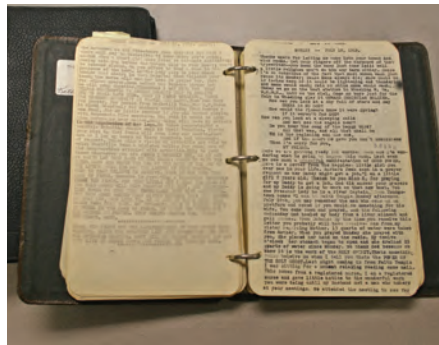
Racial reconciliation in the church often begins by making an effort to get to know people from different backgrounds. Toward that end, three articles introduce some of the people and issues important in the history of the non-Anglo churches in our Fellowship. As you read about God's handmaidens from Hispanic, African-American, and other backgrounds, reflect about the significant obstacles they overcame as women of color to follow God's call. I trust you also will be challenged by a historical analysis of the *Assemblies of God's* mixed record on racial reconciliation.

Finally, you will read about four heroes of the faith: military chaplain and New York City pastor R. Stanley Berg; early Chicago pastor Lucy Smith; India-

napolis pastor and missions leader Thomas Paino, Jr.; and Central Bible College music professor Glenda Morrow.

### Bringing History to You

*Assemblies of God Heritage* is just one of the ways the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center (FPHC) helps bring Pentecostal history into your home, school, and church. The FPHC's online research center is the world's largest Pentecostal history website and includes searchable databases, digitized periodicals and photographs, and more (see page 49). Our digital products (see pages 67-71) allow you to browse through thousands of pages of rare periodicals and books on your



**One of the acquisitions in 2007: three notebooks of Kathryn Kuhlman sermon transcriptions, donated by Patricia Pickard.**

personal computer and to perform full-text searches. These digital products are incredible aids for writing sermons or school papers and for exploring family or church history.

At the core of the FPHC is its amazing collection of printed materials, oral histories, artifacts, photographs, and memorabilia — making it one of the largest Pentecostal archives in the world. Duke University professor Grant Wacker calls the collection "unparalleled." Many scholars and church leaders, when writing about the Pentecostal movement, first do their research at the FPHC.

If you plan to visit Springfield, please stop by the FPHC museum. A walk through this 3,000-square-foot exhibit has every newcomer reminiscing and commenting on photographs

and wall images of people and places they have known as well as enjoying the interactive video kiosks and displays.

### Sharing Your Legacy

Do you have Pentecostal historical materials that should be preserved? Do you know of someone with treasures in their attic or basement? I would be honored if you would consider depositing these materials at the FPHC. We would like to preserve and make them accessible to those who write the history books. Are you uncertain whether the FPHC would be interested in your collection? I encourage you to contact the FPHC; I would be delighted to discuss whether your materials might fill in one of the many gaps in our collections.

As you read the following pages, I hope you will be inspired and challenged. The *Assemblies of God* was formed to provide a mature, Biblical voice within Pentecostal and evangelical Christianity. While no leaders — including those within the *Assemblies of God* — are perfect, the lessons from those who came before can help provide perspective for the future. I pray that we in the *Assemblies of God* are known for faithfulness to core doctrines and principles and for sensitivity to the Spirit's leading. Ours is an inspiring heritage, replete with testimonies of faithfulness, great sacrifice, changed lives, and miraculous provision. The heritage of the *Assemblies of God* is a legacy that is worth passing on to the next generation! ✨

---

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

---

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Carl Brumback, *Suddenly ... From Heaven: A History of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), 107.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-115.

<sup>3</sup> *Word and Witness* 9:12 (Dec 20, 1913): 1.



Evangelist Charles Price (standing left of podium) at a meeting held in the armory at Eugene, Oregon, March 1924.

# Dr. Charles S. Price

## His Life, Ministry and Influence

By Tim Enloe

**S** Standing before a silent crowd of thousands, the evangelist with a mild British accent dipped his index finger into the glass bowl of anointing oil. Touching the oil-covered fingertip to the forehead of the sick he prayed, “May the mercy of God and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of His Holy Spirit — which are here now — enter your soul, your mind, and your body for healing. Amen.”<sup>1</sup> The person receiving ministry then typically collapsed into the waiting arms of an altar attendant — apparently lost in another reality — as he or she was laid upon the floor.

This scene was commonplace in the ministry of Charles S. Price — one of the most noteworthy Pentecostal evangelists of the twentieth century.

Dr. Price, as his enthusiasts affectionately called him, had made a long personal journey from another continent, another belief system, and truly another way of life before he was catapulted in front of some of the largest evangelistic crowds of the era.

### Early Life

Born in 1887, Charles Sydney Price was raised in Sheffield, England by his deeply religious father and stepmother; his birth mother passed away when he was only two. His photographic memory aided by his stepmother’s encouragement toward education allowed young Charles to enter high school by age twelve.<sup>2</sup>



After high school he served in the British Navy for two years.<sup>3</sup> His parents made immense sacrifices to send young Charles to Wesley College, then to Oxford University for a total of two years studying law.<sup>4</sup> After college, he was articled to a prominent Sheffield law firm and began to admire living the high life.

Charles Price recalled:

While I loved my parents deeply, I foolishly began to believe that their outlook on life was old-fashioned and rather narrow. I had been caught in a social whirl and had become the friend of the sons of men, some of them titled [British nobility], who lived in a very dif-

ferent sphere from my simple and beautiful home surroundings.<sup>5</sup>

A series of rebellious decisions would eventually lead him to another continent to escape the past and try to find himself.

#### Departure From England

In September of 1906,<sup>6</sup> nineteen-year-old Charles left England for a fresh start in Canada. He searched diligently for work from Quebec to Winnipeg, going from one law firm to the next, but no one seemed to need a relatively inexperienced immigrant.

After much struggle, he ended up in Medicine Hat, Alberta at the home

of long-standing friends of his parents; they helped young Charles get a job on the Canadian railroad. A few months later, Price felt a strange leading to go to Spokane, Washington and found himself leaving yet another country to find purpose and direction.

Immigration records show that he crossed the border on March 20, 1907 — bound for Spokane — with \$42 in his pocket.<sup>7</sup> Some months after arriving in Spokane, he encountered an evangelistic service at the Free Methodist “Life Line Mission” that would restore his childhood faith and bring new direction to his life.

Price recounted his conversion as a young man:





When Mr. Stayt gave his altar call, I sprang to my feet, squared my shoulders and marched down to the front.... So that night I gave myself to God.... It was a quiet, methodical, almost business-like proposition I made to the Lord; yet I meant it. I was sincere.<sup>8</sup>

By the very next night Price was participating in Life Line's services, giving his conversion testimony. A short while later, the mission workers elected him to lead the service when the scheduled speaker did not arrive. With much fear, he preached his first gospel message and two men responded for salvation. Afterward, another attendee

of the meeting introduced himself to Price as Dr. Henry I. Rasmus, the pastor of First Methodist of Spokane. Putting his arm around Price, he said, "My boy, God wants you. I believe he led me into this mission to speak to you.... You are going to become a Methodist preacher."<sup>9</sup> This was the beginning of Price's career as a clergyman.

Another significant event happened while at the Life Line Mission: he fell in love with one of the workers, Bessie Osborn, and they were married in late 1907.<sup>10</sup>

### Journey Into Modernism

It appeared like Price had finally found what he was looking for — purpose, fulfillment, love and ministry — however, this new discovery was to be short-lived.

One of Price's friends had made a spiritual pilgrimage to the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles. Soon, several of the other mission workers were also baptized in the Holy Spirit, and Price could not help but notice the dramatic change in his friends' lives. He became convinced of the reality of the Pentecostal baptism and while en route to a tarrying meeting (to pray until he received the baptism in the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues), he was intercepted by another minister who sternly warned him of the dangers of this new fanaticism. Price listened to the minister's anti-revival apologetic all afternoon and was finally convinced to stay away from the tarrying meeting and Pentecostalism in general.

Later in life, he frequently lamented his decision that day. Price wrote:

That was the turning point in my life. With all my heart I believe that God had led me to Spokane so that I might step through the open door into the glorious experience that I am enjoying today, but I listened to the voice of a modernist and by my own act closed the door. Two roads were opened before me and I took the wrong one. I foolishly turned

my back on the cross and started along the trail that led to the labyrinths of modernism.... The conflict within my own breast was the age-old battle of reason against faith. How grieved and sorry I am today to have to record that reason won.<sup>11</sup>

This decision plunged Price into Modernism, the liberal movement affecting Christianity in the early 1900s. He quickly began to reason away his previous salvation experience, and his ministry from that point would be marked by the absence of altar calls and salvations for several years.

His first of seven Methodist pastorates was in Sedro-Wooley, Washington. He then went on to ministry in Anacortes before landing in Athol, Idaho. He was ordained by the Methodist Episcopal Church and continued to pastor several churches in northern Idaho and eastern Washington.<sup>12</sup>

Price's Modernistic theology continued to develop until he was called to task by his presiding elder for some of his teachings. This would be the inciting factor that led him to pastor more liberal Congregational churches for the next few years.

The Prices' first Congregational church was in Valdez, Alaska (1913-1915).<sup>13</sup> While there, he was naturalized as a US citizen<sup>14</sup> and was selected to serve as a member of the United States Alaskan Floating Court (the unique mobile court system for the lesser inhabited areas of Alaska). Once again he thrived on social standing and notoriety. His hunting expeditions, dog sledding, and photography of Alaskan life would later open doors for his blossoming oratorical skills.

Since Bessie had been ill for the duration of their Alaska pastorate, the decision was made to relocate to a warmer climate. Bessie and the four children — Ethel, Marjorie, Vernon and Lucille — would go back to stay with her family in Spokane to recover while Charles headed for California in search of a new pastorate.<sup>15</sup> Valdez newspaper clippings



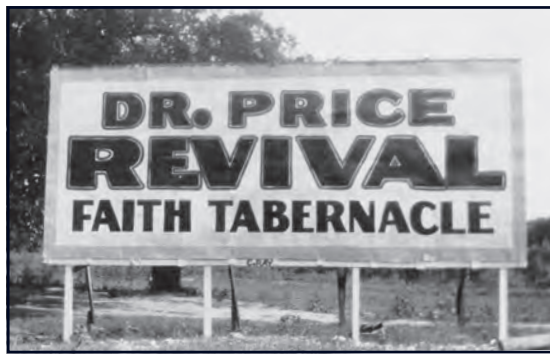
tell of a packed out church listening to Price's "eloquent" farewell address.<sup>16</sup>

Soon after Charles Price landed in San Francisco, the First Congregational Church of Santa Rosa invited him to be their pastor, and Bessie and the children rejoined him in California. There from 1915-1917,<sup>17</sup> he climbed the local social ladder and quickly became a prominent public figure. In mid-1917,<sup>18</sup> invitation was given to assume the pastorate of the sophisticated Calvary Congregational Church in Oakland, and the Prices once again relocated. Charles Price became friends with the well-known pastor of Oakland's First Baptist Church, Dr. William Keeney Towner, and together they shared a private box in the T & D Theater in the city.<sup>19</sup>

By this point, Price was deeply entrenched in Modernism and the social gospel. He led the church to install a white maple dance floor with the capacity of 1,500 and smoking lounges.<sup>20</sup> Price himself took up cigar and pipe smoking<sup>21</sup> and his messages were mainly on psychology and current issues. He would later recount,

For sixteen years I never had a convert and for sixteen years I never gave an altar call...I used to love to rise in my pulpit and tell the folks of the theatres I had attended the past week, just to show how broad I was; and I belonged to almost every lodge and club that I could join.<sup>22</sup>

His oratory skills soon opened even more prominent doors of opportunity; he was appointed to give four-minute persuasive speeches to sell war bonds for the government in theaters and shipyards. Receiving a Presidential commendation for this work and appointment to the US Committee on Public



Large revival sign for Charles S. Price meeting at Faith Tabernacle, Oklahoma City, about 1929.

Information, he would share the stage with many Hollywood celebrities during these many events.

His recognition as an articulate and entertaining speaker was rapidly increasing. It was no surprise when he received a letter from the Ellison-White Chautauqua System inviting him to be an entertainer for their programs. Resigning his pastorate in 1920,<sup>23</sup> he would tell of his adventures in Alaska and show his prized lantern slides as he entertained the crowds at Camp Curry in the Yosemite Valley (as a comedic entertainer during the summer and a lecturer during the winter; this would last for six consecutive seasons).<sup>24</sup> Rev. and Mrs. Willard Peirce, early Pentecostal pioneers, would enjoy Price's comedy, impersonations, and poetry recitations while vacationing there in 1920.<sup>25</sup>

The following year, he accepted the pastorate of the First Congregational Church in Lodi, California, where he would also continue Chautauqua lecturing on a part-time basis. Lodi is where his life's journey would take yet another turn — this time for the better.

#### Rededicates Life to Christ

In August of 1921,<sup>26</sup> some of the Lodi church members told Price of an incredible revival happening in San Jose — replete with mass salvations, miraculous healings, and tongues speaking. He was immediately unim-

pressed and told them, "I can explain it all. It is metaphysical, psychological, nothing tangible."<sup>27</sup> Even so, Price had to admit that "some of my best church members were getting inoculated."<sup>28</sup>

In an attempt to stop what he considered foolishness, Price decided to witness first-

hand the San Jose revival being conducted by Aimee Semple McPherson. He planned on going as a skeptical observer, taking notes, and then dismantling the revival and the alleged miracles publicly in Sunday morning's sermon, but first he took out an ad in the local paper with his Sunday sermon topic, "Divine Healing Bubble Explodes."<sup>29</sup>

Imagine his surprise when arriving in San Jose he saw the sign, "Aimee Semple McPherson; Auspices William Keeney Towner"<sup>30</sup> His friend and theater partner from back in Oakland was sponsoring the fanaticism!

McPherson's tent was packed with about six thousand people, and many more crowded outside to hear her message. Price met an exuberant Towner in the aisle and listened as his old friend frankly told him, "Charlie, this is real. This little woman is right. This is the real gospel. I have been baptized with the Holy Ghost. It's genuine, I tell you. It is what you need."<sup>31</sup>

Price could only find an open seat in the "cripples" section and he later noted, "That is where I belonged."<sup>32</sup> He was surprised to find that Sister McPherson's theology was thoroughly biblical and convicting; so much so that hundreds responded for salvation after just one sermon. He noted to himself, "That woman has won more people to Jesus Christ in one fore-noon than you have gotten in fourteen years of your ministry."<sup>33</sup>

That evening, he sat on the platform with the other ministers and though initially skeptical, became convinced of the reality of the healings he was witnessing. A blind person could now see; a man with crutches leapt from the plat-

Evangelists like Charles S. Price have long served a vital role in our Fellowship. Today, over 1,000 Assemblies of God evangelists continue to help win the lost and disciple believers. To learn how

your church or district can benefit from the ministry of an evangelist, visit the website of the National Evangelist's Office: <http://evangelists.ag.org>





A revival announcement from the *Minneapolis Daily Star*, about May 1926. Taken from the Charles Price scrapbook at the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.



Newspaper announcement of a revival meeting. Taken from the Charles S. Price scrapbook.

**Charles S. Price Revival Campaign**  
TESTIMONY OF HEALING

Name John C. Mackenzie

Address 3240 West Broadway Telephone Bayview 5492

City Vancouver B.C.

Date on which prayed for 26th May 1923

Date of Testimony 15th Sept 1929

Name of disease or affliction Stomach trouble nerves eyesight Rheumatism & Sunbago (effects of work)

Did your doctor diagnose your case as such? Yes

How long afflicted? in or out 6 years

(OVER)

This testimony card of John C. Mackenzie documents his healing from stomach trouble and other ailments at a Charles Price campaign at Vancouver, BC in September 1929.

form in joy.<sup>34</sup> When Sister gave the invitation for salvation, Price raised his hand to respond. A fellow minister tapped him on the shoulder and said, “Charlie, don’t you know she is calling for sinners?”<sup>35</sup> Price responded, “I know who she is calling for.”<sup>36</sup> He was quick to respond to the altar and confirmed that he “walked out of that tent a new man” with a renewed commitment.<sup>37</sup>

McPherson asked Price to testify and lead the singing the next day at the services. Willard Peirce was in attendance and turned to ask his wife why the song leader looked so familiar. She reminded her husband of their previous vacation to Yosemite Valley and the comedic entertainer from Camp Curry; it was the same man!<sup>38</sup> The Peirces and Prices were to become dear friends in

the years following. Willard and Christine Peirce hosted some of Price’s mammoth campaigns in Toronto and were his last visitors before he passed away in 1947.<sup>39</sup>

Needless to say, Price never preached the advertised sermon. In fact, it was much to the contrary. He was surprised when, after preaching an uncompromising gospel message, his church did not fire him. Instead over eighty people responded to the altars! Price had a dramatic change

of heart that would remain for the rest of his life:

In the course of a few short days not only outlook on life, my viewpoint, but my life itself had been transformed and changed. The burning, flaming fires of evangelism began to blaze in my heart. The thing that I desired more than anything else in the world was to win souls for Jesus.<sup>40</sup>

This blazing fire in his heart would awaken a hunger that he had suppressed since his early days in Spokane; he was fourteen years late for a tarrying meeting!

Receives Spirit Baptism  
Sister Aimee conducted several ser-

vices daily in the San Jose tent. Following the evening services, crowds as large as 600 would migrate to Dr. Towner’s Baptist church for all-night tarrying meetings to receive Spirit baptism.<sup>41</sup> Towner helped Price see the necessity of the Spirit’s power in his life:

Charles, you had better go all the way through. It is like trying to build a house without a hammer and saw — preaching without the Baptism of the Holy Ghost... Never mind your doubts, forget your dismay, you confessed to me there’s a hunger in your heart and I advise you to seek the infilling of the Holy Ghost.<sup>42</sup>

After four nights of tarrying, God dealt with Price about his integrity, ambition and pride. He finally came to the place where he was no longer driven to pastor large, metropolitan churches, but was willing to pastor even a small mission not unlike the Life Line Mission he had previously attended. With all of the pride-breaking God was accomplishing in Price, he still was concerned about drawing attention to himself or being a spectacle, especially that he would be overcome by God’s power and fall over in public:

I looked around at the people that were prostrate under the power of God and I did not like that. I did

not see the necessity for that and I said to myself, “Why cannot God baptize a man with the Holy Ghost while he is kneeling down?” I asked a brother, I think it was Dr. Towner, “Brother, does everybody go down when they get the Baptism?” He said, “Well I did, AND I HAVE AN IDEA YOU WILL.” Well, that is all the comfort I got out of him.<sup>43</sup>

Price found an inconspicuous place to pray — behind a piano that had been crowded into a corner. At about 1:15 in the morning,<sup>44</sup> Dr. Towner found Price still praying in secret behind the piano and convinced him to come out of hiding and pray with the others, “You have still got too much of this ‘ministerial dignity’ on your shoulders,” he said.<sup>45</sup>

Within just a few minutes of praying “in the open,” Price suddenly felt the power of God coming upon him. He began to tremble and became aware that something else was happening, “I felt so light! Just like a feather. I was going up, and yet my eyes told me I was going down — the feeling was one of going up, but in reality I was just sinking to the floor.”<sup>46</sup>

The power of God continued to increase until:

A feeling of glory came through my body and I tried to say, “Praise the Lord” and I could not. I commenced to stammer and Dr. Towner commenced to shout and to praise the Lord and he said, “Praise Him” and I said, “Prai—praise— prai—.” I could not ... with stammer-

ing lips ... I had them for just a moment or two and just then, suddenly, just as spontaneously and easily as water going over a fall I COMMENCED TO SPEAK IN ANOTHER TONGUE.<sup>47</sup>

This experience would dramatically change the course of his life and ministry; his church in Lodi would never be the same.

Soon, following Dr. Towner’s model, Price’s First Congregational Church of Lodi became the scene of all-night, Pentecostal tarrying meetings. Crowds would reach 1,000,<sup>48</sup> and the impact would be regional. Revival was shaking the once-liberal church! Within just a few months of his baptism in the Spirit, Price would report over 500 from the Lodi church having the same experience.<sup>49</sup>

As a natural outgrowth of the revival, the church formed a gospel team of hundreds<sup>50</sup> to minister in the community and in the surrounding region. Caravans of as many as 20 carloads of workers would go to nearby towns to hold evangelistic street meetings.<sup>51</sup>

A seemingly serendipitous chain of events would launch Price from the Lodi church into international prominence and the most fruitful ministry he had ever witnessed.

### Call to Evangelism

Aimee Semple McPherson had asked Price to travel with her evangelistic party to revivals in Canton, Ohio and Rochester, New York.<sup>52</sup> The effectiveness of the McPherson campaigns

— along with the amazing success of the Lodi church’s traveling gospel team — stirred his heart for itinerant evangelism. All that was missing was confirmation from God.

After returning to Lodi from his easterly trip with the McPherson party, he spent several days in prayer and bewilderment. While things were going well at the church — and a larger sanctuary was under construction to house the increasing crowds — Price was still confused.

He took a train to Oakland to visit some friends and, while walking down the street, wandered into a restaurant. A man dining there called out to him saying, “My name is Miller. I am the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Ashland, Oregon. I believe you have come into this restaurant in answer to prayer.”<sup>53</sup>

Dr. B. C. Miller had come to California as a representative of the Ashland, Oregon churches to persuade Aimee Semple McPherson to hold a campaign there; McPherson was not able to do so, but recommended that Miller invite Price in her place.<sup>54</sup> Divine providence had spoken, and arrangements for the first Charles S. Price citywide evangelistic campaign were set in motion.

### Catalyst of Revival

The Ashland campaign started on September 3, 1922<sup>55</sup> in the 5,000-seat Chautauqua lecture hall (the town’s population at the time was also about 5,000).<sup>56</sup> By September 9<sup>th</sup>, crowds of over 3,000 would witness miracles at the first divine healing service.<sup>57</sup> By September 22, the impact of the campaign would be in full swing as the building was filled and the local newspaper would read “Few Sinners in Ashland” as a subtitle on the main page.<sup>58</sup>

The following scene is recorded in a secular newspaper about a healing service at Medford during this same series of revival meetings:

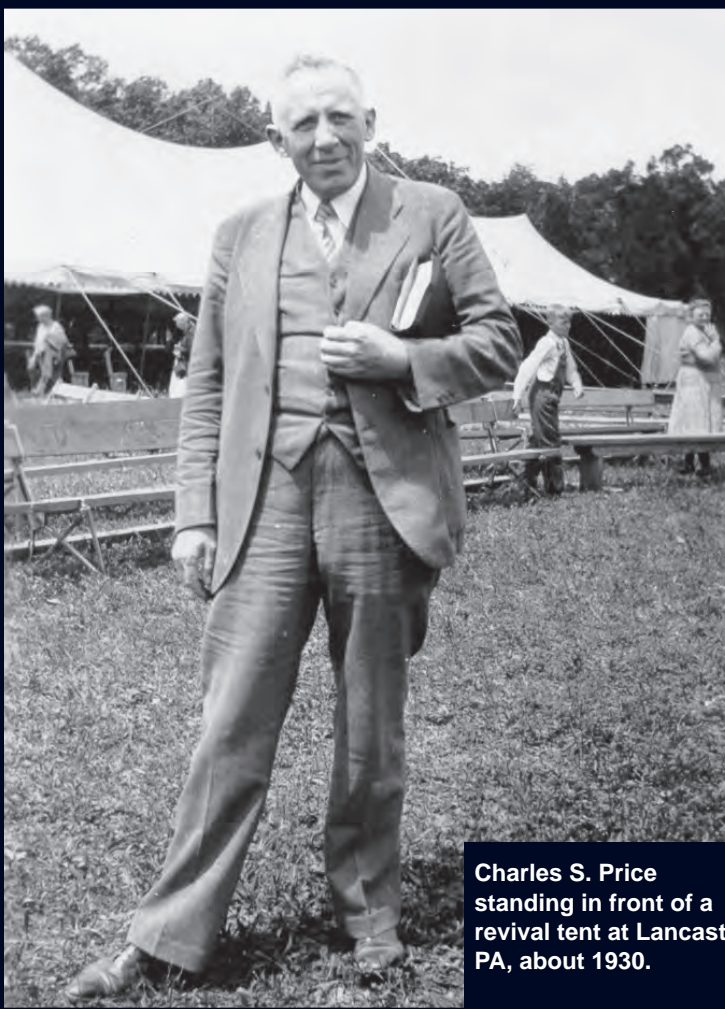
The first 37 people who moved across the platform were so filled



### The Healing Evangelists DVD

offered by FPHC contains Charles S. Price’s *Golden Grain* magazine (1926-1957) as well as periodicals and books of other well-known healing evangelists including John Alexander Dowie, Aimee Semple McPherson, Carrie Judd Montgomery, and Maria Woodworth-Etter.

Over 50,000 pages of digitized materials. \$49.95 plus shipping. To order see page 69.



**Charles S. Price standing in front of a revival tent at Lancaster, PA, about 1930.**

with the power of God that they had to be carried to their seats in the church. Out of 50 people prayed for, 47 fell under the power of God. The Lord was present in such a mighty way that twice Dr. Price collapsed and had to lay on the floor at one time to get control of himself. During the last half hour of the healing service, the evangelist was literally held up in the arms of two of the preachers. One deaf and dumb girl heard and spoke ... one goiter melted away to such an extent that the preachers were crying "Look, look!" and some of the audience broke from their seats ... it was a great night in Medford.<sup>59</sup>

Word of the revival in Oregon quickly spread, and pilgrims came from as far as British Columbia to experience the power of God, one of whom would open the doors to Canadian ministry for Dr. Price.

From his first meeting in Victoria,

British Columbia, the power of God only increased in the evangelistic campaigns. Deep conviction of sin and remarkable healings along with the curious sign of prostration during healing prayer attracted large crowds and surprisingly good favor. From West to East, Price would re-trace his earlier steps across Canada as a troubled young man. This time, however, he would bring the gospel to the largest arenas from Vancouver to Toronto, bringing hope and purpose to people who were lost.

In the Winnipeg campaign, a conservative Methodist pastor named D. N. Buntain was introduced to Spirit baptism and joined the ranks of the Pentecostals; he later became the general superintendent of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and father of the Pentecostal missionary statesman Mark Buntain.<sup>60</sup> In Edmonton, Alberta the 12,000-seat ice arena was filled to capacity, and some broke windows to climb into the building.<sup>61</sup> There a young man, Lorne Fox, was healed

of a terminal heart condition that had included 19 heart attacks. He would later carry on the campaign ministry of Dr. Price after his death.<sup>62</sup>

Headlines touted: "300 Prostrate at Once After Anointing at Arena,"<sup>63</sup> "8,000 Present at Meeting of Faith Healing,"<sup>64</sup> "Lame Arise from Chairs and Walk,"<sup>65</sup> "Cripple Walks at Arena: Scores Go Down as if Before Machine Guns,"<sup>66</sup> "Deaf and Dumb Converse After Evangelist Prays,"<sup>67</sup> and "Prayer Restores Sight."<sup>68</sup>

Minneapolis, St. Louis, Dallas, Seattle, Oklahoma City, Kansas City, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles and many other metropolitan areas would host huge Price campaigns. His meetings would also bear much fruit in smaller towns, such as Belleville, Illinois, where there were 10,000 conversions in ten days.<sup>69</sup>

From 1922 to the late 1930s, Price's mammoth campaigns brought the Full Gospel's message and experience to the masses of the United States, Canada and Northern Europe; even the Great Depression did not hinder his efforts. However, World War II brought fuel rationing and restricted travel, even blackouts; these factors greatly limited the possibility for mass meetings. During this period, Dr. Price would turn his effort to writing and meetings primarily in the populous region of Southern California which he called home.

In a 1940 Maywood, California tent meeting, a dairy farmer insistently approached Price to go to the hospital and pray for his dying sister. This young lady, Florence, had been in a car accident involving a paving truck — hot asphalt had spilled all over her body and covered her with third degree burns. Her pelvis was broken in seven places, and her leg had been torn loose from the socket. Dr. Price went to the hospital and prayed for Florence's healing — which God miraculously granted to the amazement of the hospital staff. This man, Demos Shakarian, became a close friend to Dr. Price, and they would meet weekly for lunch until Price's death in 1947.<sup>70</sup>



Price campaign party, date unknown. (L-r): Marjorie Lewis, Edith Lewis, Ethel Price, Charles S. Price, Marjorie Price (secretary), Lucille Price, Evelyn Carvell (personal worker & soloist), Albert Knudson (pianist), and O. Lewis (building manager).

### Influence and Contribution

Demos Shakarian, founder of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, was not the only prominent charismatic movement leader whom Price deeply influenced. In his 1922 Albany, Oregon campaign, strange circumstances brought a young girl from Concordia, Missouri to the meetings. There she witnessed Spirit baptism, divine healing, and prostration for the first time; this experience would significantly mark her life. Kathryn Kuhlman would become the leading proponent of these same three experiences in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>71</sup>

Charles Price was one of the most prolific Pentecostal authors of his era, writing twenty-one books and editing

his *Golden Grain* monthly periodical — of which he was the primary contributor — for twenty-one years. Of all his works, the book *The Real Faith* has had the broadest impact; it has been continuously in print since 1940. The thesis of *The Real Faith* is that faith is more than merely hoping or saying the right things (such as the positive confession movement would teach), but rather, a divinely imparted spiritual commodity that comes as you draw nearer to Christ; a sudden certainty that God alone can give.

Though Price's ministry was interdenominational, he found a special home in Assemblies of God circles. Serially preaching district camps in Oregon, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Pennsylvania — to name only a few, he would also preach at the AG's biennial General Council on occasion. He influenced and inspired a generation of young Pentecostal pastors to convincingly preach and boldly demonstrate the power of the gospel.

A host of postwar healing evangelists would devour his books and magazines to further their own ministries. T. L. Osborn would note that the *Golden Grain* was a lifeline during his early stint as a missionary in India.<sup>72</sup> Price's healing ministry would be a model that many would emulate.

### Conclusion

Charles S. Price suffered heart problems for about three months prior to his death,<sup>73</sup> and on March 8, 1947 he passed away — only two months shy of his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. The funeral was conducted by two of his closest friends, Rev. Claire Britton of Alhambra, California and Rev. A. A. Wilson of Kansas City, Missouri. He was interred in Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale, California<sup>74</sup> — not far from the grave of Aimee Semple McPherson.

Evangelists Hattie Hammond and Lorne Fox would fulfill Price's speaking engagements. His long-term assistant and governess to the children, Evelyn Carvell, would continue to publish the *Golden Grain* periodical for more than ten years. His writing ministry would continue to be promoted by his faithful daughter Marjorie until her death in 1994; the messages printed in his many books have proved to be his own written legacy.

This lost young man who made his long, personal journey from England to the United States via Canada — from rebellion to Modernism to Pentecost — had indeed found himself. From Sheffield, England to worldwide spiritual influence, his journey was complete.

Still today, the evangelist with a mildly British accent and a profound salvation/healing ministry is affecting many through his preserved teachings on the Holy Spirit, divine healing and other Pentecostal themes. ✨

### Appreciation to John Carver

Inspiring, insightful stories from our Pentecostal past could not be written without the behind-the-scenes work of those who collect and preserve historical materials. It is appropriate to recognize Rev. John Carver for his lifelong research of the Pentecostal healing movements in America. Tim Enloe says, "I am deeply indebted to Rev. John Carver of Faith Outreach Archives for access to his vast collection of personal effects and materials relating to Dr. Charles S. Price." Visit the Faith Outreach Archives website for more information about the healing movement: [www.johncarverministries.org](http://www.johncarverministries.org)



**Tim Enloe is a student of Pentecostal church history with a special interest in revivals and healing evangelists. He and his wife, Rochelle,**

**travel internationally conducting Holy Spirit Conferences, emphasizing a practical approach to the Holy Spirit's power and giftings. Visit their website and blog for more information: [www.enloeministries.org](http://www.enloeministries.org)**

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Charles S. Price, "The Story of the Conversion and Healing Ministry of Dr. Charles S. Price," *The Voice of Healing* 5:9 (December 1952): 2.
- <sup>2</sup> Charles S. Price, *The Story of My Life* (Pasadena, CA: Charles S. Price Publishing Co., 1935), 5.
- <sup>3</sup> 1917 US draft registration card reveals all prior military service.
- <sup>4</sup> I was not able to confirm the years or degree attainment from either Wesley College or Oxford due to record losses during World War II.
- <sup>5</sup> Price, *The Story of My Life*, 7.
- <sup>6</sup> Allan Line's S.S. *Ionian* passenger list, September 1906.
- <sup>7</sup> *List or Manifest of Alien Passengers Applying for Admission to the US from a Foreign Contiguous Territory*, Washington State Ports, March 1907.
- <sup>8</sup> Price, *The Story of My Life*, 14.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.
- <sup>10</sup> Tim Enloe, personal interview with Bessie Price's niece, Evelyn Christian, June 9, 1999.
- <sup>11</sup> Price, *The Story of My Life*, 19.
- <sup>12</sup> Charles S. Price, "How I Received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit," *Golden Grain* 4:8 (October 1929): 7.
- <sup>13</sup> From an undated newspaper clipping in Price's early personal scrapbook.
- <sup>14</sup> Charles S. Price, US military registration card, 1916.
- <sup>15</sup> From an undated newspaper clipping in Price's early personal scrapbook.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> "Church Listings," *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, CA), Oct. 20, 1917.
- <sup>19</sup> Willard Peirce, audio of Rev. Peirce's recollections of Charles S. Price, no date.
- <sup>20</sup> Charles S. Price, "The Ark is Coming Up the Road," *Golden Grain* 2:6 (August 1927): 8.
- <sup>21</sup> Charles S. Price, "How I Received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit," *Golden Grain* 4:8 (October 1929): 8.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* In his earliest account of this, "Our Personal Testimony" [tract] *Words of Life No. 642* (Framingham, MA: Christian Workers Union, October 7, 1922), Price recalls that he did not give an altar call for 14 years.
- <sup>23</sup> "Pastor Quits Pulpit for Lecture Platform," *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, CA), March 14, 1920.
- <sup>24</sup> Charles S. Price, "Our Personal Testimony" [tract] *Words of Life No. 642* (Framingham, MA: Christian Workers Union, October 7, 1922), 2.
- <sup>25</sup> Peirce audio.
- <sup>26</sup> William Keeney Towner, "An After That Experience," *Golden Grain* 1:7 (September 1926): 22.
- <sup>27</sup> Charles S. Price, "Our Personal Testimony," 3.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup> Price, *The Story of My Life*, 25.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.
- <sup>32</sup> Price, "Our Personal Testimony," 5.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>38</sup> Peirce audio.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup> Price, *The Story of My Life*, 32.
- <sup>41</sup> Price, "How I Received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit," 8-9.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>48</sup> Price, *The Story of My Life*, 38.
- <sup>49</sup> Charles S. Price, "Testimony of Dr. C. S. Price," *Bridal Call* 6:5 (October 1922): 12.
- <sup>50</sup> Price, *The Story of My Life*, 52.
- <sup>51</sup> Price, "Testimony of Dr. C. S. Price," 13.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>53</sup> Charles S. Price, "My Call," *Golden Grain* 15:3 (June 1940): 6.
- <sup>54</sup> Tim Enloe, personal interview with Dr. Edward Miller, son of B. C. Miller, August 17, 1999. Dr. Edward Miller had vivid memories of the Ashland campaign and of Price's long-term friendship with the Miller family. Miller is a missionary to Argentina and was instrumental in the great Tommy Hicks campaign there in the 1950s.
- <sup>55</sup> "Revival Campaign to Begin Sunday," *Ashland Daily Tidings* (Ashland, OR), Sept. 1, 1922, 1.
- <sup>56</sup> "Evangelist to be in Ashland Another Week," *Ashland Daily Tidings* (Ashland, OR), Sept. 22, 1922, 1.
- <sup>57</sup> "Divine Healings Attract 3000 to Chautauqua Bldg.," *Ashland Daily Tidings* (Ashland, OR), Sept. 9, 1922.
- <sup>58</sup> "Evangelist to be in Ashland Another Week," *Ashland Daily Tidings*, (Ashland, OR), Sept. 22, 1922, 1.
- <sup>59</sup> "Medford Day is Huge Success for Dr. Price," *Ashland Daily Tidings*, (Ashland, OR), Sept. 29, 1922, 1.
- <sup>60</sup> D. Mark Buntain, *Why He is a Pentecostal Preacher* (Toronto, ON: Full Gospel Publishing House, 1944), 86-90.
- <sup>61</sup> Price, *The Story of My Life*, 50.
- <sup>62</sup> Lorne F. Fox, "The Charles S. Price Story," *World Pentecost* (Issue 3, 1973): 24.
- <sup>63</sup> "300 Prostrate at Once," *The Evening Telegram* (Toronto, ON), October 4, 1924.
- <sup>64</sup> "8,000 Present," *Free Press Evening Bulletin* (Winnipeg, MB), August 13, 1924.
- <sup>65</sup> "Lame Arise," *Free Press Evening Bulletin* (Winnipeg, MB), August 16, 1924.
- <sup>66</sup> "Cripple Walks," *Vancouver Daily World* (Vancouver, BC), May 16, 1923, 1.
- <sup>67</sup> "Deaf and Dumb Converse," *East St. Louis Daily Journal* (East St. Louis, IL), February 18, 1925, 1.
- <sup>68</sup> "Prayer Restores Sight," *The World Pointer* (Oklahoma City, OK), Aug. 23, 1931, 1.
- <sup>69</sup> Price, *The Story of My Life*, 54.
- <sup>70</sup> Nickel, Thomas, *The Shakarian Story* (Costa Mesa, CA: FGBMFI, 1964), 18.
- <sup>71</sup> Audio interview of Kathryn Kuhlman and Myrtle Parrott by Jamie Buckingham, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL, December 1974.
- <sup>72</sup> John W. Carver, personal interview of T. L. Osborn, May 11, 2001.
- <sup>73</sup> Charles Sydney Price, death certificate, County of Los Angeles, California, March 8, 1947.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

# Teen Challenge

## 50 Years of Miracles

By David Batty and Ethan Campbell

**T**een Challenge, one of the world's largest and most successful drug recovery programs, grew out of an Assemblies of God minister's burning desire to share Christ with troubled youth. When David Wilkerson began his evangelistic ministry to New York City gang members in 1958, he could not have imagined the incredible ministry God was starting, not only on the lives of youth in trouble, but within the broader Christian church.

His 1963 best-selling book, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, described the dramatic way the Holy Spirit worked through his ministry. This book became a catalyst for the emerging charismatic renewal in Protestant and Catholic churches. Today, there are more than 200 Teen Challenge programs in the United States and another 400 programs in 95 other nations. A 50th anniversary celebration is slated to be held June 25-29, 2008 in New York City. For more information about Teen Challenge and the anniversary activities see: [www.teenchallengeusa.com](http://www.teenchallengeusa.com).

### The Call

In the summer of 1957, the murder of Michael Farmer in New York City began a chain of events that would extend to the whole world over the next 50 years. This brutal murder of Farmer by eighteen members of a teen gang, the Egyptian Dragons, became a major news event in the months that followed. The February 24, 1958 issue of *Life Magazine* published a two-page spread on this trial.<sup>1</sup>

At the time, David Wilkerson was 26 years old, the pastor of an Assemblies of God church in Philipsburg, Pennsylvania. Praying alone in his office on a Tuesday night, he felt drawn to the *Life Magazine* on his desk. He opened it to the story about the Michael Farmer trial in New York

City. The article featured a large ink drawing of the seven defendants in court. In Dave's own words,

My attention was caught by the eyes of one of the figures in the drawing. A boy. One of seven boys on trial for murder. The art-

ist had caught such a look of bewilderment and hatred and despair in his features that I opened the magazine wide again to get a closer look. And as I did, I started to cry...

I was dumbfounded by a thought that sprung suddenly into my head — full-blown, as though it had come into me from somewhere else. *Go to New York City and help those boys.*<sup>2</sup>

### Early Failure

With the prayers of his church members, Dave drove to New York City two days later with his youth pastor, Miles Hoover. They did not meet with success right away. In fact, their attempts to reach the teen gang members on trial ended in failure. Dave was thrown out of the courtroom after an attempt to speak with the judge, and an embarrassing photo of him holding up a Bible was featured in the *New York Daily News*.

During his second visit to the city, Dave discovered an unexpected result of the courtroom incident and newspaper photo. Several of the Egyptian Kings gang had been in the courtroom the day he had been thrown out, and gang members throughout the city were closely following news reports of the trial. Without realizing it, Dave had suddenly become a celebrity among local gangs. As he explained, "Their logic was simple. The cops didn't like me; the cops didn't like them. We were in the same boat, and I was one of them."<sup>3</sup>





Shortly after their conversion, Nicky Cruz (left) and Israel Narvaez (right) left their gang to follow Christ. Nicky is exchanging his gang bat for a Bible from Dave Wilkerson. Soon after this picture was taken, Nicky left for Bible school, graduated, and then entered full-time ministry as an evangelist. Israel went through several more difficult years before he reestablished his relationship with Christ.

Dave took advantage of his newfound popularity to preach the gospel, both in street meetings and in the crowded rooms of gang hideouts and heroin “shooting galleries.” Conversions to the Christian faith did not come quickly or easily for teens caught up in the gang culture of drugs, fighting, and sex. With the help of 65 Assemblies of God churches from New York, Dave held a citywide rally for gang members.

#### Turning Point

The services took place July 8-12, 1958, but the last night stood out from the rest, a night that would mark a turning point for the ministry. Members of the Mau Maus, Bishops, and several other gangs were in attendance. At the conclusion of his sermon, dozens of gang members came forward to accept Christ as Savior, including Nicky Cruz, a teen gang leader from Brooklyn.

A few months later Nicky Cruz enrolled in the Latin American Bible Institute in La Puente, California. When he graduated three years later, he embarked on a career in

Christian ministry that would defy conventional wisdom. God took this ex-gang leader and turned him into an anointed evangelist who has preached to millions.<sup>4</sup>

#### Teen Age Evangelism

On October 5, 1959, Assemblies of God pastor Reg Yake pulled together a group of pastors to consider supporting Dave Wilkerson. Dave gave his new organization the name Teen Age Evangelism, which was changed to Teen Challenge a few years later.

In the late spring of 1961, an infusion of twenty new full-time workers arrived in New York City: sixteen students from Central Bible College in Springfield, Missouri, and four from Lee College in Cleveland, Tennessee. Throughout the summer, they conducted street rallies, shared the gospel with anyone who would listen, and offered shelter at the house to young people in need. Two of these CBC college students, Mike and Kay Zello, would go on to a lifetime ministry with Teen Challenge, pioneering a Teen Challenge center in Washington, DC, and then in 1995 becoming missionaries with Global Teen Challenge.<sup>5</sup>

## New Direction

In the late 1950s, narcotics use increased sharply across New York City, and with it came a corresponding decline in teen gang activity. More and more of the people reached through Teen Challenge were struggling with drug addiction. Soon it became clear that the needs of the community had changed.

Evangelism, street meetings, and outreach to teens remained essential, but Teen Challenge's mission grew broader — to encompass recovery from addiction, counseling, and training in practical life skills. The ministry focused not only on Christian conversion, but also on Christian discipleship, the long-term practice of applying spiritual disciplines to daily life. Don Wilkerson, Dave's brother, joined the ministry and became the director of the program.



**Sonny Arguinzoni, former drug addict, helped establish over 400 Victory Outreach churches.**

One of the first drug addicts to come to Teen Challenge was Sonny Arguinzoni. After he completed the Teen Challenge program in 1962, he attended Bible school and then worked at Teen Challenge for several years in Los Angeles. He then pioneered Victory Outreach, a church for drug addicts and their families. This church grew, and then began to plant other churches. Today there are more than 400 churches that are part of the Victory Outreach fellow-

ship, and many of these churches have a recovery program for drug addicts.

## Residential Drug Recovery Program

After a few years of trial and error, Teen Challenge staff members sensed the need for a structured program that could saturate young men and women in a healthy environment with Christian teaching over an entire year.

An advocate for this new type of ministry was Frank Reynolds, the Cornell-educated Assemblies of God pastor on Teen Age Evangelism's first steering committee. Like many others, Frank marveled at the reports of miracles coming from the Brooklyn center. At the same time, he recognized that addicts who had been delivered from drugs faced an enormous challenge when they tried to return to their old neighborhoods and attend churches. Temptations from their old lifestyle remained strong, churches often proved ill-equipped to deal with their problems, and many Teen Challenge converts fell back into old habits.

In June of 1962, Dave Wilkerson purchased a farm near Rehrersburg, Pennsylvania, and he made plans to develop the



**The Teen Challenge Training Center in Rehrersburg, PA, became the model for the Christian discipleship programs to help drug addicts become established in their new walk with Christ. Here is one of the first Teen Challenge students being baptized in water at the Training Center by the director, Frank Reynolds (on the right).**

very first Teen Challenge Training Center for men. Frank Reynolds became the first executive director of this center.<sup>6</sup>

On the very same day that Frank and his wife Gladys left Staten Island for Rehrersburg, Dave Wilkerson asked if they could also take a recent convert named Harvey Kuflik. Frank agreed, so Harvey moved into the farmhouse with them and their four young boys while they built the first dormitory. Harvey went on to be the first graduate of the Teen Challenge Training Center.

With the Rehrersburg Center, Frank's vision of a long-term Christian discipleship program was finally realized. By the late 1960s, he had established a model of addiction recovery that would become the signature of Teen Challenge programs nationwide. The Farm took in men recruited by the Brooklyn center and gave them eight to ten months of a structured Christian environment.

John Melendez came to Teen Challenge in 1964, leaving behind a chaotic life — he had been a member of the Dragons gang, a drug addict who had been close to death. He found new hope for his life at Teen Challenge. In 1976 he completed a master of divinity at Fuller Theological Seminary and joined the US Army as a chaplain. He traveled to combat zones all over the world, including Iraq, preaching to servicemen of every rank, from generals to privates. In 2002 he retired from the Army, having earned the rank of lieutenant colonel.



**John Melendez went from being a gang member to serving as a US Army chaplain.**

In the next decades, hundreds of young men experienced God's transformation in their lives and went on to



**The Cross and the Switchblade** book told the story of how the ministry of Teen Challenge started in New York City. The book became an amazing success with over 15 million copies printed in the first 10 years. It has been translated into more than 30 languages and continues today to have a major influence in the lives of people, introducing them to Jesus and His power to set people free from addiction. The movie, starring Pat Boone and Eric Estrada, has also seen worldwide distribution where millions have seen this powerful story of modern-day faith in action.

become pastors, missionaries, evangelists, teachers, and business leaders. In 1976, the federal government funded a research project that verified that over 70% of the graduates of Teen Challenge were continuing to live a drug-free life. Several other independent studies in the years since have confirmed that Teen Challenge is one of the most successful programs to help people find deliverance from drug addiction. “The Jesus Factor” is the key to this success.

The drug problem was not limited to men, and from its earliest days, Teen Challenge also ministered to women who were addicted to drugs. A home for women was established in Brooklyn in the early 1960s, and under the leadership of John and Elsie Benton it saw similar success for women to experience God’s transformation in their lives.

### National Exposure

In the early 1960s, Dave Wilkerson teamed up with John and Elizabeth Sherrill of *Guideposts* magazine to write the story behind Teen Challenge. With the publication of *The Cross and the Switchblade* in 1963, Teen Challenge found itself in the national spotlight, deluged with pleas for help.

In the 45 years since this book was first published, it has been translated into more than 30 languages, and well over 15 million copies have been printed. Tens of thousands of people have seen their lives change as a result of this book

and the movie with the same name — through accepting Christ, receiving calls to ministry, and being challenged to develop a life of faith.

### The Spread of Teen Challenge

In 1961, the same summer that the first volunteers moved into 416 Clinton Avenue in Brooklyn, a new Teen Challenge center opened in Chicago. Three years later, centers had sprouted up in Boston, Dallas, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. The new centers across the USA varied widely in their philosophies and approaches to addiction recovery. Some worked exclusively with young teens, while others took in an older population.

Many of these new Teen Challenge ministries were pioneered by people who had read *The Cross and the Switchblade* or had visited another Teen Challenge ministry. Beginning in the 1960s, the drug epidemic swept across the country and around the world, and these pioneers answered the call.

In 1972 Frank Reynolds, who became the first national leader, started building an official network of Teen Challenge centers, which could access ministry resources from the same central hub.

In 1977, Frank hired Dave Batty as the national curriculum coordinator. Over the next 20 years, Dave wrote classroom materials to train the new Christians at Teen Challenge

on a variety of practical topics — for example, “Love and Accepting Myself,” “Anger and Personal Rights,” “Attitudes,” “Temptation,” and “How Can I Know I am a Christian?” Today these discipleship training materials are used in Teen Challenge programs nationwide and around the world.

Steve Hill was one of those who came to Teen Challenge a drug addict and left with a call to full-time ministry, serving first as an Assemblies of God world missionary, and then as the evangelist at the Brownsville Revival in Pensacola, Florida.

### National Recognition

As Teen Challenge grew to become the nation’s largest privately funded drug recovery program, it garnered the attention of national leaders. President Ronald Reagan stated, “Not only does Teen Challenge help our young people deal with their substance abuse, but it also gives our kids something to live for — a relationship with God, a healthy self-esteem, and a direction in their lives that finally leads somewhere. I speak from more than 20 years of knowledge of the organization when I tell you that the Teen Challenge program works.”

President George W. Bush has also staunchly supported Teen Challenge. In 2003, he appointed Dennis Griffith, executive director of Teen Challenge in Southern California, to serve on the White House Advisory Commission on Drug-Free Communities.



**President Ronald Reagan endorsed Teen Challenge. He is pictured here with Dennis Griffith (right), the executive director of Teen Challenge of Southern California. Dennis currently serves at the request of President George W. Bush on the White House Advisory Commission on Drug-Free Communities.**

The specific challenges have changed enormously over the years, but Teen Challenge’s answer to them remains the same. Teen Challenge leaders of the more than 200 centers in the USA recognize that preventing addiction and other life-controlling problems is a process, and Christ alone holds the key to prevention and cure. This message of hope, from the very beginning, would not be confined to America alone.

## The Power of a Name

### Steve Hill

Over the years, Steve Hill lost many friends to drugs. One was stabbed to death for failing to pay off his supplier, two died while driving drunk, and another killed himself in jail. Steve knew it was only a matter of time before he was on that list, too.

When his father died, Steve got high on pills and stayed that way until the funeral was over. All the while, he ignored his grieving family members.

“My heart was sealed,” he said later, “a heart of stone.”

All of that changed on October 25, 1975, when Steve got sick from heroin. As his body went into convulsions, he could feel death coming. It scared him more than anything else ever had, and suddenly he wanted to live.

For three days he lay helpless in bed. Then his mother invited a Lutheran minister to visit and tell him about Jesus. The sound of that name brought hope, and Steve began to shout it aloud — “Jesus! Jesus!” His convulsions stopped, and a sense of peace flowed through him.

The name of Jesus also helped keep him away from his old lifestyle. “Within weeks,” Steve recalled, “I was separated from every drug pusher or user friend. It was as if the word ‘Jesus’



spoken in love and respect made them scatter.”

Steve’s problems weren’t over, though. He still faced felony charges for selling drugs, and up to 25 years in jail. But with the help of a merciful judge, he was transferred to Outreach Ministries of Alabama, and from there to Mid-America Teen Challenge at Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

After graduating from the program and from Twin Oaks Leadership

Academy in Texas, Steve and his wife Jeri worked as Teen Challenge staff workers, then as youth pastors and evangelists, helping to plant churches in Argentina, Spain, and Russia. From 1995 to 2000, they helped lead the famous Brownsville Revival in Pensacola, Florida, which saw the gospel preached to more than 3 million people.

Since then, Steve has reached millions more through stadium rallies, televised messages in 150 countries, and his short autobiography, *Stone Cold Heart*. He currently pastors Heartland Fellowship Church in Dallas, Texas.

**Source: Stephen Hill, *Stone Cold Heart*, 4th ed. (Dallas, TX: Together in the Harvest Publications, 1995), 41, 46.**



**President Gerald Ford (left) greets Don Wilkerson. Don assisted his brother Dave in establishing the Teen Challenge ministry in New York City. From 1995-2007 Don served as the executive director of Global Teen Challenge, assisting in establishing Teen Challenge centers around the world.**

### Spreading the Word

From the moment it was published in 1963, Dave Wilkerson's dramatic memoir *The Cross and the Switchblade* became an international publishing phenomenon. At the same time, Dave received invitations to speak around the world. The messages he delivered in nations such as Canada, Holland, Germany, Brazil, South Africa, Australia, and Thailand were primarily evangelistic, intended to share the good news of Jesus Christ. But many who attended these events, who had read of Dave's successes in Brooklyn, responded by starting the same type of outreaches in their home countries. In Brazil, for example, dozens of Teen Challenge centers sprang up after Dave headlined a series of rallies in 1971.

Over the next three decades, as the total number of centers grew to more than 600, they would discover for themselves the importance of fellowship and regional organization which led to the formation of the international ministry known today as Global Teen Challenge.

### Pioneers in Europe

In 1963, Howard and Pat Foltz were part of a team that pioneered the Teen Challenge center in Dallas, Texas. Several years later, Howard and Pat sensed God calling them into foreign missions, and they moved to Holland. Teen Challenge's first "test run" in Europe was a small coffeehouse in The Hague. Like the coffeehouses started by Ann Wilkerson (mother of David Wilkerson) in Greenwich Village in New York City, it served free food and provided a safe atmosphere of music and conversation with Christian volunteers. The Holland coffeehouse became a catalyst that jump-started dozens of similar ministries across the continent. Within two years, more than 30 Teen Challenge coffeehouses had sprung up in Germany, France, Italy, Portugal, and Switzerland.

The second phase of Teen Challenge's European ministry began in 1971, when the Foltzes moved to Germany. A family donated their farm, and Howard and Pat established a residential center, similar to the Teen Challenge Training Center in Rehrersburg, Pennsylvania.

For the addicts who came into the program, the Teen Challenge farm was a lifesaving success. At the same time, Howard traveled the continent, visiting churches and casting a long-term vision for the ministry. Two years later, there were more than fifty Teen Challenge centers and rehabilitation farms in Europe from Norway to Italy.

As Teen Challenge ministries reached out to drug addicts, they experienced the same kinds of miracles that had occurred in Brooklyn. Often new converts developed into effective leaders, whose testimonies gained national exposure in their countries.

A lady living on the streets in Prague, Czech Republic, climbed into a dumpster one night to escape the cold. Covering herself with papers, she found a handwritten copy of *The Cross and the Switchblade* in



**Howard Foltz (left) served as an AG missionary to Europe and helped pioneer the ministry of Teen Challenge in Eurasia. He is pictured with Dieter Bahr (right), who pioneered the Teen Challenge centers in Bitburg, Germany and in Luxembourg.**

her language inside the dumpster. Her heart was touched by the story. A few days later, she came across a Teen Challenge center on the streets of Prague. She entered the program, and God transformed her life.

The third phase of Howard and Pat's European mission came in 1973, when they moved to Wiesbaden, Germany to establish the Eurasia Teen Challenge Training Center. Like the staff training schools in the USA, the Wiesbaden center provided training for Teen Challenge graduates and staff members preparing for careers in ministry. The Training Center raised up workers who could serve in a variety of capacities, and it gathered information on which Teen Challenge centers around the world needed leaders, and which countries were ready for pioneers to start a new ministry.

### Eurasia Spreads Its Wings

Eurasia Teen Challenge was so named because it included ministries from Europe and western Asia — as far as the Middle East, India, and Pakistan.

# “Mom, I want you to bury me alive”

## Marina Makorin

**A**t age 16, out of curiosity, I took my first injection of heroin,” states Marina. “I was addicted to heroin from that first shot.” Marina was raised in Moscow, Russia, where both her parents were doctors. Though she completed high school and then college, drugs more and more became the master of her life. Finally in deep despair, only 22 years old, she called her mother and told her, “Buy a casket, put me in it and bury me alive. Then I will die and be free of this misery.”

Fortunately her mom learned about Teen Challenge and brought Marina to the center in Moscow. God transformed her life, and while she was a student in the program, she received



**Marina and Roman on their wedding day after graduating from Teen Challenge in Moscow. Her husband also is a Teen Challenge graduate. They have recently completed Bible school in Ukraine and are preparing for a life in full-time ministry.**

a call from God to full-time ministry. She recently graduated from Bible school and is looking to a future of ministry helping other young people to discover the real life she has found in Jesus.

One of Eurasia Teen Challenge’s core values from the start was to help Teen Challenge centers pioneer new ministries in other countries. After graduating from Bible college and working with Teen Challenge ministries, João Martins became national director of Teen Challenge-Portugal in 1991. Currently he oversees five recovery centers, two re-entry houses, and 26 coffeehouses nationwide, and the ministry has helped plant Teen Challenge centers in Macau (now part of China) and Brazil. Under Pastor Martins’s leadership, Teen Challenge-Portugal has also pioneered Teen Challenge ministries in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique.

Teen Challenge in the United Kingdom was instrumental in starting centers in Bombay, India, and in Swaziland. Thousands of miles away, Australians Doug and Anna Boyle with Americans Dr. Marty and Rhonna Bassett founded the Teen Challenge center in Kazakhstan in 1994, a ministry that now includes five recovery centers, a crisis center, and a school, serving more than 500 residents. Americans Dr. Mark and Lynda Hausfeld started Teen Challenge Centers in 1998 in Pakistan. Now there are two men’s and one women’s centers in that nation. Chris and Linda Munford from the United Kingdom established Teen Challenge Kyrgyzstan in 2002. Americans Travis and Raushaun Moran founded Teen Challenge Uzbekistan in 2002, and that program has grown into three centers around the country.

The ever stronger bonds that Eurasia Teen Challenge centers forged across national and cultural lines helped foster the concept of an international Teen Challenge organization. Meanwhile, hundreds of Teen Challenge centers were starting independently in other parts of the world, but with little or no coordination. All of these Teen Chal-


lenge programs are registered with the governments in the Islamic nations they serve.

Early on, Howard Foltz recognized the need for an international body that could provide fellowship, support, and training for centers around the world. His early attempts to create an international Teen Challenge coalition fell through, however, in part because of disputes with the Assemblies of God over corporate structure.

## A New Fellowship

At the annual Eurasia Teen Challenge conference in 1995, leaders from around the world gathered to create the Teen Challenge International Fellowship, an organization that would include every Christian ministry that called itself “Teen Challenge.” Its goal was to start new recovery centers, foster communication between those that already existed, and provide staff training. At their first meeting, Don Wilkerson was elected as the Fellowship’s executive director.

Since 1995, Global Teen Challenge has assisted in starting Teen Challenge centers in at least 43 more countries. Teen Challenge now has more than 600 ministries in 96 countries on all six continents, making it one of the world’s largest drug recovery programs. Several hundred more Christian drug recovery programs have opened around the world, using the same basic approach of evangelism and discipleship training for those caught in addiction.

In 2007 Jerry Nance was elected as the new president of Global Teen Challenge. When he looks to the future, Jerry says: “Drug addiction has always been a worldwide problem. But God loves to solve problems and make people whole. For the past 50 years, He has literally changed the world through this ministry, and with His help, the next 50 years will see even more miracles than the last.”<sup>7</sup> 



**David Batty, director of operations at Global Teen Challenge, served as the executive director of Teen Challenge in Brooklyn, NY from 1997-2007. Previously he served as the national curriculum coordinator for Teen Challenge USA for 20 years. He and his wife Patty began their work with Teen Challenge as volunteers in 1967.**



**Ethan Campbell is assistant professor of English at The King's College in New York City. He also serves on the board of directors at Teen Challenge in Brooklyn, NY.**

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Mass Murder of a Teen-age Gang in New York,” *Life Magazine* (Feb. 24, 1958): 30-31.

<sup>2</sup> David Wilkerson with John and Elizabeth Sherrill, *The Cross and the Switchblade* (New York: Jove Special Sales Edition, 1993; Bernard Geis, 1962), 7. Multiple editions of *The Cross and the Switchblade* have been printed of this popular book since 1962. Citations here come from the paperback student edition.

<sup>3</sup> Wilkerson, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, 26.

<sup>4</sup> See also Nicky Cruz with Jamie Buckingham, *Run Baby Run* (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos, New. ed., 2001), which has continued to be a best seller since 1968.

<sup>5</sup> See also George R. Carson, “Teen Challenge and the Development of Social Concern Ministries in the Assemblies of God” (Ph.D. dissertation, St. Louis University, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> See also Frank Reynolds with Joan Kruger, *Is There a God?: The Life and Times of Frank Reynolds* (Lenexa, KS: 3Cross Publishing, 2006), which provides an insider’s perspective concerning the early years of Teen Challenge and Frank Reynolds’ role in it.

<sup>7</sup> David Batty, interview with Jerry Nance, 2007.

## Teen Challenge Bibliography

- As the Spirit Leads Them*. CBS News, 1971. Used as archive footage in *It Begins with One*; Teen Challenge International, 2000.
- Bicknese, Aaron Todd. *The Teen Challenge Drug Treatment Program in Comparative Perspective*. Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1999.
- Bredesen, Harald. “Gang Preacher.” *Christian Life* (March 1961): 22-26.
- Bush, George W. “State of the Union Speech.” January 29, 2003.

- Carson, George R. “Teen Challenge and the Development of Social Concern Ministries in the Assemblies of God.” Ph.D. dissertation, St. Louis University, 2002.
- The Cross and the Switchblade*. Directed by Don Murray. Worcester, PA: Vision Video, 2003; Gateway Films, c1970.
- Cruz, Nicky, with Jamie Buckingham. *Run Baby Run*. Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2001, c1968.
- Davidson, Irwin and Richard Gehman. *The Jury Is Still Out*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959.
- Dean, Jamie. “Stamped Out.” *World Magazine*, August 27, 2005.
- An Evaluation of the Teen Challenge Treatment Program*. Washington, DC: National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1978.
- Hess, Catherine. *Research Summation: H.E.W. Study on Teen Challenge Training Center Rehrersburg, PA*. Springfield, MO: Teen Challenge USA, 1976.
- Hill, Stephen. *Stone Cold Heart*, 4th ed. Dallas, TX: Together in the Harvest Publications, 1995.
- The Jesus Factor*. Directed by Kris Yeaworth. [Chester Springs, PA]: Valley Forge Films, 1976.
- Manuel, David. *The Jesus Factor*. Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1977.
- “Mass Murder of a Teen-Age Gang in New York.” *Life Magazine* (February 24, 1958): 30-31.
- Maynard, Roy and Marvin Olasky. “Governor Bush Backs Teen Challenge.” *World Magazine*, July 29-Aug. 5, 1995.
- Mills, James. “Drug Addicts Part 2.” *Life Magazine* (March 5, 1965): 102.
- Milne, Darla. *Second Chance: The Israel Narvaez Story*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1980.
- Olasky, Marvin. “Addicted to Bureaucracy.” *Wall Street Journal* (August 15, 1995): A16.
- “Preaching the Monkey Off Their Backs.” *Time Magazine* (August 14, 1964): 43.
- Reynolds, Frank, with Joan Kruger. *Is There a God?* Lenexa, KS: 3CrossPublishing, 2006.
- Sherrill, John and Elizabeth. “Too Strange to Be Coincidence” (two-part article). *Guideposts*, November & December 1961.
- Thompson, Howard. “Pat Boone Plays Preacher-Hero in ‘Cross and Switchblade.’ ” *New York Times* (June 8, 1972): 61.
- Thompson, Roger. *Teen Challenge of Chattanooga Alumni Survey*. Springfield, MO: Teen Challenge USA, 1994.
- Wilkerson, David. *Beyond the Cross and the Switchblade*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1974.
- Wilkerson, David and Leonard Ravenhill. *Twelve Angels from Hell*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1965.
- Wilkerson, David and Phyllis Murphy. *The Little People*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1966.
- Wilkerson, David, with John and Elizabeth Sherrill. *The Cross and the Switchblade*. New York: Jove Special Sales Edition, 1993; Bernard Geis, 1962.



Elvis Presley, 1955

# CONFLICTED BY THE SPIRIT

The Religious  
Life of Elvis  
Presley

By James R. Goff, Jr.



*In life and in death, Elvis Presley holds a fascination far beyond that of even the most successful singers and movie personalities. Worldwide, thirty years after his death, millions upon millions recognize him by his first name alone, the mention of which conjures up a surfeit of sight, sound, and memory. Less known is the real man, and especially the religious yearnings and conflicts that alternately soothed and convicted him. Ever enamored by gospel music, Presley was likewise influenced — and perhaps haunted — by the religious strictures of his youth. This early religious training was decidedly evangelical and Pentecostal in its orientation. Ultimately, it served as a religious umbrella under which the entertainer sought refuge in times of turmoil.*

There are a number of definitions of having “made it big”; however, when someone has a “Reese’s Big Cup” named in his honor (the candy maker’s recent rendition of the famous chocolate candy with a unique “Peanut Butter & Banana Crème” flavor), then by the standards of the economic and social world in which we live, one has indeed made it. So it is with Elvis Aaron Presley.

But those nurtured in the Pentecostal tradition, and I suspect Assemblies of God in particular, remain a bit more ambivalent about their most famous Sunday school prospect from the early 1950s. Evidence of this ambivalence, even among Presley’s most ardent fans, is inferred in Joe Moscheo’s recent offering, *The Gospel Side of Elvis*, a reflection on the gospel musician’s years of singing with and interacting with the celebrated king of rock-n-roll. Moscheo notes that,

wherever he travels, in this country and outside of it, the most frequently-asked question, “especially by the Christian folks in the audience, is my

opinion of whether Elvis was a true believer. ‘Do you think Elvis was a Christian?’ they want to know.”<sup>1</sup>

Gauging one’s religious commitment is always a tricky business. It goes against the grain of Christian theology at best while, at worst — for the historian at any rate — it is downright out of bounds, evidence of one’s own



Baby Elvis with his parents, Gladys and Vernon Presley, circa 1938.

ahistorical proclivity. Nevertheless, religious faith — the fact that people believe and that those beliefs have historical consequences — is a critical part

I personally decided to study Elvis from the perspective of his religious background for a number of reasons. For one, I grew up knowing that like

“We were a religious family, going round together to sing at camp meetings and revivals. Since I was two years old, all I knew was gospel music.”

— *Elvis Presley*

of understanding our past.

For someone raised in the South in a Pentecostal subtext in the 1940s and 1950s, it is especially pertinent. Without some calculation of how religion shaped the beliefs and mindset of such an individual, it is simply impossible ever to understand, truly understand, that person and their life experience.

me Elvis had grown up attending a Pentecostal church. And, like me, he knew the names of

the gospel quartets and watched the *Gospel Singing Jubilee* on Sunday mornings. It was a perspective that we shared despite a generation of difference in age and a thousand miles in distance. We also were both Southern males, which means that — at least since Wilbur Cash’s *The Mind of the South*, a goodly number of historians have spilt a lot

of ink trying to understand us.<sup>2</sup>

To write history well requires an ability to understand, truly understand, that about which you write — to understand the cultural expectations of a particular time and place, to understand the ramifications of a particular idea and event, to understand both what was and what might have been, what one became and also what one wanted to become. In this case then, it is significant to try and discover what Elvis wanted to be, what he wished he might be, not just what he became.

Part of getting to the heart of this is fully comprehending the picture of Elvis in Mr. Bill Haltom's 12<sup>th</sup> grade Sunday school class in the early 1950s in Memphis First Assembly of God at 1084 East McLemore Street.<sup>3</sup> That Sunday school experience and whatever lasting influence it might have had came from even deeper roots.

The connection was made in part because the Presleys had attended an Assemblies church in Tupelo, Mississippi, before moving to Memphis in late 1948 and also because the Blackwood Brothers, one of the most prominent of the nation's gospel quartets, also attended the church after moving to Memphis in 1950. The connection with the church was also related to the fact that First Assembly ran a bus ministry every Sunday and the route used ran literally by the front door of the



Elvis; circa 1946

*Exactly who was this  
Pentecostal boy, raised in  
Assemblies of God churches,  
and how did his religious  
moorings inform his life?*

Presley home in the nearby projects known as Lauderdale Courts.

Some years ago, back in 1999, I interviewed Charlie Hodge, one of Elvis's stage men and close friends, and one thing he told me stuck in my mind. It was his phrasing in particular that caught my attention. As we talked about Presley's interest in and love for gospel music, Hodge said, "Elvis was mostly Christian." He then caught himself and said, "Well, yes. He was a Christian."<sup>4</sup>

I've often wondered if perhaps he was closer to the truth the first time. Nevertheless to paraphrase John Shelton Reed in his observation that "even those Southerners who don't

go to church at least know which one they're not going to," it is clearly the case that, long after Elvis stopped attending, he knew that the church he was not attending was Memphis First Assembly of God.<sup>5</sup>

Elvis was certainly part of Southern culture. And, as there is with the region, there was much about him that was likeable. Needless to say, he had a gifted voice and a willingness to share that gift with others. Also, he had a tender heart and was generous, giving away more than two hundred cars in his lifetime — sometimes to relative strangers who happened by. Reportedly, he enjoyed seeing the look of joy on their face when they learned the remarkable news.<sup>6</sup> Even more impressive are the things Presley did for needy people (such as \$500 in cash given to a blind street person) without ever asking for or getting publicity.<sup>7</sup> He also scored numerous points for adhering to a time-honored Southern tradition: By all accounts, he was mannerly and polite to his elders.

Yet there was a darker side: a violent temper, self-doubt and depression, hedonism and excess, and a penchant for drugs and self-destruction that led to his death at the age of forty-two. There also was searching: Not only searching through the scriptures of his boyhood in Assemblies of God churches but also searching through the Self-Realization movement, visits to Sri Daya Mata (aka Fay Wright) who ran the Self-Realization Park in Santa Monica, California, near Elvis's West Coast Beverly Hills home.<sup>8</sup>

Exactly who was this Pentecostal boy, raised in Assemblies of God churches, and how did his religious moorings inform his life?

#### Elvis's Religious Roots

Just down the street from the two-room shotgun house in which Elvis was raised in East Tupelo stood the First Assembly of God on North Berry Street. Elvis's mom and dad attended



During the 1950s, Elvis attended First Assembly of God, 1084 E. McLemore in Memphis, where James Hamill served as pastor.

there while they were dating and considered it their church home after they were married and set out to make a life together.

Gladys Presley made a point to take her young son to church. She later recalled that Elvis became particularly enchanted with the choir, so much so that one Sunday morning, shortly before he turned three, he slipped from his mother's lap and ran down to the front where he began imitating the choir singers. Reverend Frank Smith, who served as pastor of the church during most of Elvis's boyhood, is sometimes credited with helping the young Presley learn guitar chords after Gladys Presley talked her son into getting a guitar for his birthday rather than a rifle.<sup>9</sup>

Elvis himself later remembered this early period of his life as being critical to his foundation, possibly his style, and certainly his attraction to gospel music:

We were a religious family, going round together to sing at camp meetings and revivals. Since I was two years old, all I knew was gospel music. That music became such a part of my life it was as natural as dancing. A way to escape from the problems. And my way of release.<sup>10</sup>

After the move to Memphis, it was Elvis, more so than his parents, who was attracted to Memphis First Assembly of God, perhaps because of the vibrant youth program. Young Presley joined the Sunday school and participated in the youth activities, but the Presley family did not join Memphis First. Reverend James Hamill, long-time pastor of First Assembly, remembered that the parents were not regular attendees, though Elvis was: "His parents came only sporadically; they hap-



Rev. James E. Hamill

pened to be people who went from church to church. Elvis came more regularly than they did. He got tied in; he belonged

to the Sunday School."<sup>11</sup>

In 1950, Presley's attachment to Memphis First Assembly would have grown if for no other reason than that the Blackwood Brothers, perhaps the most successful group in Southern gospel history, had moved from Iowa to Memphis, in part to be closer to their home in northern Mississippi. Stars of radio and early television, three group members attended Memphis First as did some of the members of the Stamps Quartet.

During lunch breaks, fans would come by WMPS and watch the live radio show there in Memphis. The Blackwoods were Gladys Presley's favorite group. Apparently Elvis and Vernon Presley favored the Statesmen. As such the family mirrored thousands of Southern gospel fans who, after the two famous quartets teamed up in 1951, engaged in a tenacious rivalry that benefited the fortunes of both groups.<sup>12</sup>

The church services at Memphis First were unique for Pentecostals only because it was a larger urban church. Nonetheless, the Pentecostal fire had not died. Jim Hamill, son of Rev. James Hamill, remembers that his father once

went seven Sundays in a row without preaching because the music program so inspired the congregation. As the Spirit moved, the Rev. Hamill simply "dismissed everyone to the prayer rooms."<sup>13</sup> Despite the minister's often-stated concerns about the lifestyle of some gospel musicians, there was an abundance of musical style in the church — including solos, duets, choir selections, and quartet numbers.

Elvis and some of his friends would also occasionally slip into the East Trigg Baptist Church in Memphis, under the leadership of Rev. W. Herbert Brewster, to hear the black gospel choir (even though one of the friends who went with Elvis to these services, Marty Lacker, was actually Jewish). Presley and his mom would also sometimes attend the nearby Popular Street Mission where Brother Denison was the preacher. On occasion,



Elvis, from the movie, *Fun In Acapulco*, 1963.

the mission even provided a cache of donated clothes from which Elvis could pick.<sup>14</sup>

And then there were the oft-quoted stories of Elvis wanting — but not getting — a job in the Songfellows, a local quartet that Cecil Blackwood and Jim Hamill had organized. Presley sometimes practiced with the quartet and also with another group that Hamill had put together as a student at nearby Memphis State University.

Hamill was later accused of telling his buddy Presley that he couldn't sing. Hamill however vehemently denies this today. Rather, the rap on the young Presley was that he could not sing harmony. In a dilemma known all too well to Southern gospel fans and singers, most of whom were trained either by ear or through shape notes, Presley simply could not hear his part well enough to stay with it and then make

the necessary adjustments when other quartet members needed to switch parts. Throughout his career, Presley sang lead — the only necessity for a soloist — but Southern gospel quartet members were required to switch off and take the melody or a different harmony part, oftentimes within the same song.<sup>15</sup>

The younger Hamill remembered another important story about Presley, interesting if for no other reason than because it occurred after he had become well-known as a rock n' roll singer. The young Presley would occasionally still visit the church when his schedule allowed — but he would arrive late and sneak unobserved into the balcony to hear the music and the sermon. When the service ended, he would always hang around to speak to Rev. Hamill and would slip some contribution, evidence of the newfound success, into his hand — sometimes a hundred, sometimes as much as five hundred dollars.

Jim Hamill remembers his father comparing that to another famous resident of the church who occasionally attended. That resident, the famous Harland Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken fame, would march down the center aisle and take a seat near the front — completely dressed in white suit with his cane twirling.<sup>16</sup>

Presley's connection with Memphis First continued during the early years of his rise to superstardom. Rev. Hamill preached Gladys Presley's funeral in August 1958 and maintained for a time some influence over the young Presley. In a 1993 interview, he recalled Presley coming by the church to visit at some point, presumably in the 1960s, before returning to Hollywood. He confessed to the preacher that he was not living as he should and then, after a time of prayer and repentance, noted that he often wondered on stage what his efforts might do if he put them to work for the Lord.

Hamill attempted to link Presley with a minister friend in North

Hollywood but recalled that, to his knowledge, this connection, intended to provide spiritual guidance, never took place. After this, his link with Presley essentially ended. Part of the problem may have been a relationship already strained after Hamill refused to officiate at the July 1960 marriage of Vernon and Dee Presley, who was divorced with a living former husband. If so, the break would actually con-

entire article seemed to hinge mainly on Presley's penchant for gospel music first and foremost, it featured interviews with insiders, among them Reverend Hamill, hinting strongly that Elvis might in the near future give up the glitter of fame and fortune via rock-n-roll in order to pursue a strictly gospel path.<sup>19</sup>

And, as Presley strayed from his religious moorings, the background must indeed have had another impact,

accepted the National Jaycee Award as one of the Top Ten Young Men in America for 1970. When the press interviewed the ten young men, reporters asked about their religious beliefs. The final news report would not have been encouraging to most pastors across the country.

The Memphis *Commercial Appeal* revealed that "six or seven of the men said they didn't belong to a church

---

“They’ve set me up on a pedestal and I can’t get off of it. If I could go back and do it over, I would sing just gospel music.”

— *Elvis Presley*

---

firm the degree to which the younger Presley had actually been reared in a typical 1950s Pentecostal environment. However, given Elvis Presley's concern over the marriage, conducted less than two years after the death of his mother, it is more likely, as Reverend Hamill suspected, that Elvis simply fell under other influences and decided not to pursue the spiritual connection in North Hollywood.<sup>17</sup>

#### A Pentecostal Impact?

How much of the Pentecostal church training remained with Elvis? Certainly some. Natalie Wood, herself raised Jewish, was struck when she dated Elvis in the late 1950s that he was so sincerely interested in God and the Bible. She had never met anyone her age with such devoted interests. She believed it was related to Presley's struggle to accept how fortunate he was: "He felt he had been given this gift, this talent, by God. He didn't take it for granted. He thought it was something that he had to protect."<sup>18</sup>

Even the tabloids picked up on the young Southern boy's religious inclinations. The December 1957 issue of *Modern Screen* asked its readers, "Is Elvis quitting for God?" Though the

as it would on any Southern boy raised in a spirit-filled church. It surely affected all the members of the celebrated "Million Dollar Quartet" — Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Elvis Presley. Lewis, the one with the strongest Pentecostal ties, was convinced the music they sang would send them all to hell.

Cash and Perkins were a bit more open to the possibilities that rock n' roll might be just another musical phenomenon, but they were no less haunted by the religious strictures of their youth, particularly because they seemed to have so much difficulty following the straight and narrow. In his autobiography, Cash recalled of Perkins: "We shared a lot in the Christian values area, too. Neither of us was walking the line as Christians, but both of us clung to our beliefs. Carl had great faith, and at his depths, when he was drunkest, what he'd talk about was God and guilt — the same subjects I would bring up when I was in my worst shape."<sup>20</sup> The comment mirrors what those close to Presley have said about his darkest hours as well.

One of the highlights for Presley in terms of speaking out and taking a stand was in January 1971 when he

and felt a certain hypocrisy about organized religion." But, speaking of their native son, the paper noted: "But Elvis seemed to feel religion was very important in his life . . . in the sense that he had called on God many times for strength . . . [and] that 'God is a living presence in all of us.'"<sup>21</sup>

The awards ceremony (ironically held in the same auditorium where Elvis used to attend gospel concerts) featured one of the few speeches in Presley's public life. It was short and eloquent, delivered with humility and with a reference to the biblical Kingdom of God in our midst.

When I was a child, ladies and gentlemen, I was a dreamer. I read comic books, and I was the hero of the comic book. I saw movies, and I was the hero in the movie. So every dream that I ever dreamed has come true a hundred times. These gentlemen over here, these are the type who care, are dedicated. You realize if it's not possible that they might be building the kingdom, it's not far-fetched from reality. I'd like to say that I learned very early in life that: "Without a song the day would never end/ Without a song a

man ain't got a friend/  
Without a song the  
road would never  
bend/ Without a song  
. . .” So I keep singing  
a song. Good night.  
Thank you.<sup>22</sup>

Two years later, at the press conference announcing the January 1973 *Live Via Satellite* performance from Hawaii (a program that shattered all previous records by reaching an estimated one billion people worldwide), Elvis was again asked about religion. “Are you a religious person, Elvis?” The answer: “It’s played a major role in my life, gospel music. I like it.

We often go into our suite and sing all night.” Then, a follow-up: “How do you account for your success after seventeen years?” The answer, with a smile and a laugh: “A lot of praying, sir.”<sup>23</sup>

Throughout his life he maintained friendships with gospel singers, the strongest tending to be Pentecostal: James Blackwood, J. D. Sumner, and Dottie Rambo among them. Even his Baptist preacher friend, Hovie Lister, was sometimes described as a “Pentecostal Baptist.”

James Blackwood remembered being called out to Graceland to sing gospel music not long after Elvis returned from service in the Army. “Gospel music was his first love. He didn’t listen to anything but gospel music. Nearly every night while he was doing his tours, he’d call J. D. and the Stamps up to his suite to sing gospel music. It was his first love.”<sup>24</sup>

Elvis would often appear backstage at the National Quartet Convention, first in Memphis and then later when



Elvis in Las Vegas, 1970.

it had moved to Nashville. Early on he would actually sing something like “Peace in the Valley,” backed up by members of the two host groups, the Statesmen and Blackwood Brothers. After Elvis’s manager, Colonel Tom Parker, put a stop to the singing, Presley would just come out and take a bow. But he liked being there, listening to the music and hobnobbing with the gospel quartet singers.<sup>25</sup>

Somewhere around 1959, Elvis met the Rambos backstage at the National Quartet Convention. A family group that mixed Southern gospel, country, and contemporary gospel, the Rambos thrived in large part because of Dottie Rambo’s songwriting skills. Presley probably also watched them frequently after, in the late 1960s, they became regulars on the *Gospel Singing Jubilee* syndicated television program. Dottie and Buck Rambo remembered meeting frequently with Elvis when their paths crossed in Las Vegas and Lake Tahoe. They would always talk religion. Dottie Rambo expressed an intuition that

“he was a runaway boy — that he was running away from God. We would minister to him and he’d say, ‘I love God. I know God.’”<sup>26</sup>

He sometimes complained about the position in which he found himself: “They’ve set me up on a pedestal and I can’t get off of it. If I could go back and do it over, I would sing just gospel music.”<sup>27</sup> These conversations with the Rambos recall the recollections of another friend and music associate. Felton Jarvis, Presley’s record producer for RCA beginning in the mid-1960s, could not forget one of the last conversations with his friend, “I remember Elvis telling me, ‘I’m just so tired of being Elvis Presley.’”<sup>28</sup>

Also telling was the limited relationship that Presley built with the independent charismatic evangelist Rex Humbar of the Cathedral of Tomorrow in Akron, Ohio. A regular viewer of Humbar’s weekly television broadcasts, Presley perhaps took to the media evangelist as a logical replacement for his former associates at Memphis First after superstardom limited his ability to interact with the local church.

In his autobiography, Humbar recalled praying with Presley in between performances in Las Vegas after he asked the evangelist and his wife to come backstage to talk with him. Humbar remembered that Presley cried and that the Spirit of God was present as they read the Bible and prayed together. The minister also promised to say a special prayer for Elvis on his next trip to the Holy Land as he visited the site of the crucifixion. This was just months before Presley died in August 1977. Significantly, Presley had apparently tried to arrange for another meeting with Humbar at his Graceland home but, due to scheduling conflicts, the meeting never took place.<sup>29</sup>

Presley’s religious inclinations clearly continued beyond his Sunday school experiences at 1084 McLemore.

Unfortunately, like a good Southern male, he nonetheless had little difficulty rationalizing his own self-indulgent behavior. One of his old friends, Lamar Fike, who spent his life living and working for Presley, recalled when asked about the many women in Presley's life: "He had absolutely no guilt and no trouble balancing his behavior with his religious beliefs."<sup>30</sup>

drug use with his religious convictions. His response was direct, if disturbing: "He didn't. Elvis didn't consider himself a drug addict. A drug addict was somebody who stuck a needle in his arm or snorted coke or did all the street drugs. He abhorred those people."

Another fellow Mafia member, Lamar Fike, added, "I don't think that it ever crossed his mind. Does the Bible

It teaches that we are all a part of God, but we are gods, ourselves, in a way. People who follow that think you can have this aura, like Christ, by being pure, like Mahatma Gandhi. In other words, you can't believe that Christ was the only one. . . . Elvis was taken by it. But deep back in his mind, what he learned as a child in the Assembly of God church stood

---

**Presley's religious inclinations clearly continued beyond his Sunday school experiences at 1084 McLemore. Unfortunately, like a good Southern male, he nonetheless had little difficulty rationalizing his own self-indulgent behavior.**

---

In the same vein, Elvis seems to have been particularly adept at keeping his gospel music contacts and friends from First Assembly separate from his other associates. Gene Burgess, an old acquaintance from the Sunday school days at Memphis First remembered being invited to Graceland only to be left standing on the street corner with no way inside. He later discovered from a mutual friend that Elvis had rescinded the invitation on the spur of the moment because he "felt embarrassed for anyone who had known him at church to see what was going on in his house."<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, some of the members of the celebrated Memphis Mafia, Presley's live-in bodyguards, later mused that the gospel music friends knew only one part of the Presley lifestyle. In reflecting on J. D. Sumner's oft-recounted defense of Elvis, including the stories involving drug use, Marty Lacker noted, "The truth is, he was there when Elvis went on tour, and that was it. And even then, the two camps were separate."<sup>32</sup>

And in that separate camp, an entirely different realm existed, one that rationalized the seductive temptations of stardom. In a 1995 publication, Lacker remembered being asked how Elvis could have rationalized his

tell you not to take Placidyl? Does it say, 'Thou shalt not pop a Seconal'? None of us had any guilt. Elvis had his own religion."<sup>33</sup> Incredibly, the members of Elvis's inner circle nonetheless confessed that the celebrated singer had, at least on one occasion, tried LSD, a fact confirmed in subsequent memoirs.<sup>34</sup>

Equally disturbing for Pentecostals is the widely-reported interest in and fascination with spiritualism. With his tendency toward self introspection and experimentation possibly intensifying as a direct result of his increased drug use, the readings and philosophical discussions of alternate religious experiences ranged far and wide for someone with a background in Pentecostalism.<sup>35</sup>

Close to home, his cousin, Billy Smith, who worked for Presley periodically throughout the singer's career, was struck by the attraction to Self-Realization that was nurtured especially by Presley's friendship with his hairdresser, Larry Geller. Smith's recollection demonstrates both the degree to which these ideas were foreign to his cousin's background as well as the seductive power that the message must have had for one in search of new spiritual answers.

out more. He was thinking, "Who's right and who's wrong?" He got into a turmoil about it, so he tried to combine the religions. He'd say, "This new stuff sounds a little easier, so maybe it's right. After all, we're all part of God."<sup>36</sup>

Yet, for those closest to him, it was a haunting search that was never quite fulfilled. Another family member, Annie Cloyd Presley, believed her famous relative felt guilty precisely because he had been raised holiness and was now doing things he knew were wrong. For her, the solution could only have been found by staying close to, rather than straying from, the moorings of the past: "I feel like if Elvis could have stayed in the church, even though he sang these kind of songs, he could have served God better and been a happier man. I'm not saying he was wrong in the way he lived; I'm saying he would have been a happier man, because that was the way he had been raised."<sup>37</sup>

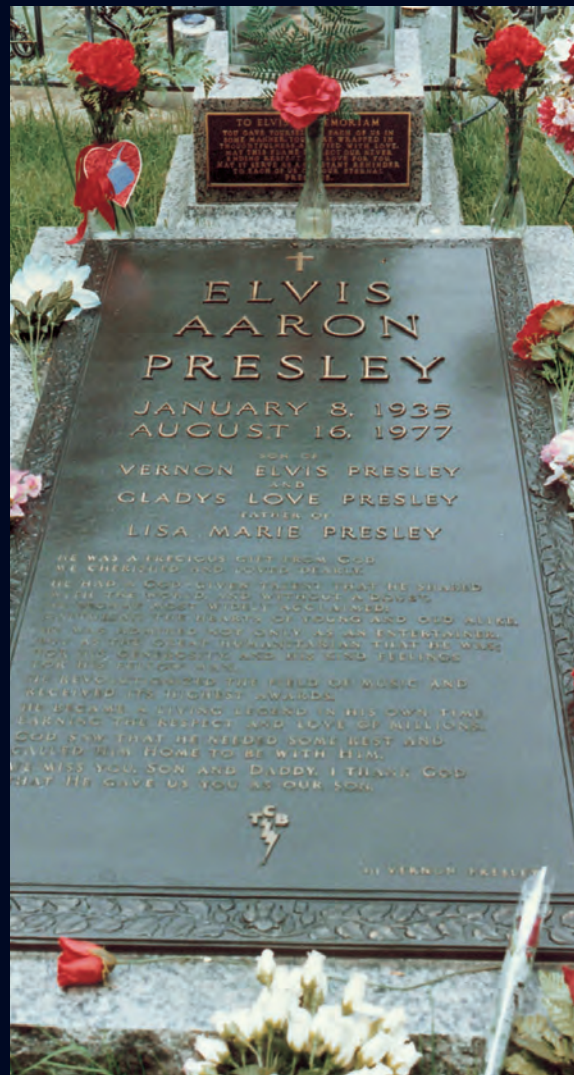
His old friend Jim Hamill mirrored the opinion of Elvis's young stepbrother, Rick Stanley (today an independent Baptist evangelist), when he noted that Elvis, always affected by his Chris-

tian background, developed the later interest in spiritualism books as a way of searching. Another gospel music icon, Les Beasley of the Florida Boys (whose *Gospel Singing Jubilee* show Elvis watched religiously), cited the drugs as the reason for the unusual religious interests.<sup>38</sup>

Rick Stanley, the stepbrother, himself a victim of drug dependency during the years he lived with Presley, recalled much later what he surely could not have perceived at the time: “Elvis was not well schooled enough to recognize the central contradiction in the spiritualists’ reinterpretation of Christ’s message.”<sup>39</sup> Also, perceptively, Stanley noted that “in spite of his early exposure to Christianity through the lens of the Assemblies of God Church, Elvis knew very little about the Christian faith.”<sup>40</sup>

On a lighter note, there was much about Presley’s experience in church and in Christian circles that nonetheless directed his life and career. He told Tony Brown, then the young pianist for J. D. Sumner and the Stamps and later the President of MCA Records: “You gospel singers, man, started this long hair. I lost three jobs trying to grow my hair like a gospel singer. I used to look at J. D.’s hair when I was a kid and I’d say, man, that’s for me. And that orange suit J. D. used to wear. I said this has gotta be for me. Gospel Music.”<sup>41</sup>

In the same vein, there were also



Elvis’s grave marker at the Graceland estate in Memphis, Tennessee.

the stories about where Elvis got his “wiggles.” Some credited Reverend Smith from way back in Tupelo; other historians have credited James “Big Chief” Wetherington, the bass singer for the Statesmen who did indeed have a habit of shaking his leg on up tempo songs. Elvis oftentimes simply said “I can’t help it” or “It’s just my way of expressing how I feel when I move around.” And, to country singer Webb Pierce, a young Elvis confessed that he moved because he was so nervous and the motion kept him from fainting.<sup>42</sup>

But, then again, maybe early experiences in church did play some part

in the “Pelvis” phenomenon. In a July 1956 interview, Elvis himself seemed to credit some unnamed gospel singers from his early days at First Assembly, Tupelo: “There were these singers, perfectly fine singers, but nobody responded to them. Then there were these other singers — the leader was a preacher — and they cut up all over the place, jumping on the piano, movin’ ever’ which way. The audience liked them. I guess I learned from them singers.”<sup>43</sup>

Likewise there is much to learn yet about the boy from Memphis, and as we learn, there is invariably the opportunity to learn something about ourselves along the way. Members of Memphis First Assembly in the 1950s were certainly familiar with the biblical admonition from Proverbs 22:6 to “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” In the case of Elvis, it can be debated whether or not he lived long enough to be, in the modern world at least, accurately termed “old.” Even so, it is clear that, as he grew older, the decisions he made and the influences he sought took him far away from the training he received as a child in Assemblies of God churches. On the other hand, neither did he ever quite depart from it. ✨

Elvis images used by permission, Elvis Presley Enterprises, Inc.



**Dr. James R. Goff, Jr.** is the I. G. Greer Distinguished Professor of History at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. He is researching a

book-length manuscript on the religious background and cultural ramifications of the Elvis Presley phenomenon and would appreciate any personal reflections that readers might share of having interacted with Presley in an Assemblies of God environment. Please send these reflections to [goffjr@appstate.edu](mailto:goffjr@appstate.edu).



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Joe Moscheo, *The Gospel Side of Elvis* (New York, et al.: Center Street, 2007), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Wilbur J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941). Cash first explored his interpretation of the Southern male as the celebrated “Man at the Center” in an article, also entitled “The Mind of the South,” in *The American Mercury* 18 (October 1929): 185-192.

<sup>3</sup> Warren S. Grant, *Celebrating 90 Years: First Assembly of God, Memphis, Tennessee* (Memphis: First Assembly of God, 1997), 12. Experiences with Presley in the Sunday school class are also related in Gene Burgess, *Sponsored By The Holy Spirit* (New York, et al.: iUniverse, Inc., 2005), 25-26.

<sup>4</sup> James Goff, Jr., personal interview with Charlie Hodge, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, May 27, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> John Shelton Reed, *My Tears Spoiled My Aim: And Other Reflections on Southern Culture* (New York and San Diego: Harvest Books, 1994), 141.

<sup>6</sup> *200 Cadillacs*, directed by Dan Griffin (Produced by 200 Cadillacs, Inc., distributed by Image Entertainment, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Rose Clayton and Dick Heard, eds. *Elvis Up Close in the Words of Those Who Knew Him Best* (Atlanta: Turner Publishing, Inc., 1994), 196.

<sup>8</sup> Alanna Nash with Billy Smith, Marty Lacker, and Lamar Fike, *Elvis Aaron Presley: Revelations from the Memphis Mafia* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 337-339.

<sup>9</sup> Vince Staten, *The Real Elvis: Good Old Boy* (Dayton, Ohio: Media Ventures, Inc., 1978), 32-36.

<sup>10</sup> Mick Farren, comp. and Pearce Marchbank, ed., *Elvis In His Own Words* (London: Omnibus Press, 1977), 29.

<sup>11</sup> Staten, 47.

<sup>12</sup> On the teamwork of the two quartets in the 1950s, see James R. Goff, Jr., *Close Harmony: A History of Southern Gospel* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 171-174.

<sup>13</sup> James Goff, Jr., personal interview with Jim Hamill, Greenville, South Carolina, August 12, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Nash, 32. See also Peter Guralnick, *Last Train to Memphis: The Rise of Elvis Presley* (Boston, et al.: Little, Brown, and Company, 1994), 39, 75.

<sup>15</sup> Hamill interview. Also told in Bob Terrell, ““Three Chords and a Cloud of Dust”: The Jim Hamill Story,” *Singing News* (February 1988): 24-25. On Elvis’s relationship with the Songfellows, see Guralnick, *Last Train*, 67-69, 75-77, 503.

<sup>16</sup> Hamill interview.

<sup>17</sup> Wayne Warner, oral history interview with Reverend James Hamill, Tape 2, March 24, 1993, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center. In the interview, Hamill says this event happened “not long before he [Presley] died.” However, other references in the conversation suggest that it actually occurred at least a decade or more earlier.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Harry Brown and Pat H. Broeske, *Down at the End of Lonely Street: The Life and Death of Elvis Presley* (New York: Dutton, 1997), 110.

<sup>19</sup> Claire Williams, “Is Elvis Quitting For God?” *Modern Screen* (December 1957): 58-59, 70-72.

<sup>20</sup> Johnny Cash with Patrick Carr, *Cash: The Autobiography* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 96. Of the four, only Perkins did not have specific Pentecostal connections.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Guralnick, *Careless Love: The Unmaking of Elvis Presley* (Boston, et al.: Little, Brown, and Company, 1999), 428.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 429.

<sup>23</sup> Jerry Hopkins, *Elvis: The Final Years* (New York: Berkley, 1981), 105.

<sup>24</sup> James Goff, Jr., personal interview with James Blackwood, Springfield, Arkansas, August 3, 1996.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Buck Rambo and Bob Terrell, *The Legacy of Buck and Dottie Rambo* (Nashville: Star Song Publishing, 1992), 143.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>28</sup> Clayton and Heard, 326.

<sup>29</sup> Rex Humbard, *The Soul Winning Century: The Humbard Family Legacy . . . One Hundred Years of Ministry* (Dallas: Clarion Call Marketing, 2006), 190-193.

Other sources date the episode specifically to December 1976. See Richard Mann, *Elvis* (Van Nuys, California: Bible Voice, Inc., 1977), 155-158 and Rick Stanley with Paul Harold, *Caught In A Trap* (Dallas, et al.: Word Publishing, 1992), 141.

<sup>30</sup> Nash, 165.

<sup>31</sup> Burgess, 26.

<sup>32</sup> Nash, 528. Predictably, Sumner, while not totally denying the stories of drug abuse, argued that many of the drugs were consumed by the members of the Memphis Mafia. See J. D. Sumner with Bob Terrell, *Elvis: His Love for Gospel Music and J. D. Sumner* (Asheville, NC: Gospel Quartet Music Company, 1991), 85-92.

<sup>33</sup> Nash, 336.

<sup>34</sup> On the LSD experiment, see Nash, *Elvis*, 336-337; Jerry Schilling with Chuck Crisafulli, *Me and a Guy Named Elvis: My Lifelong Friendship with Elvis Presley* (New York: Gotham Books, 2006), 137-139; Sonny West with Marshall Terrill, *Elvis: Still Taking Care of Business* (Chicago: Triumph Books, 2007), 167-170; and Priscilla Beaulieu Presley with Sandra Harmon, *Elvis and Me* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1985), 213-214. Billy Stanley also recounts at least one episode involving cocaine. See Clayton and Heard, *Up Close*, 269.

<sup>35</sup> On the shift, see Presley, *Elvis and Me*, 197-211. See also Larry Geller and Joel Spector, *If I Can Dream: Elvis’ Own Story* (New York: Avon Books, 1989).

<sup>36</sup> Nash, 337-338.

<sup>37</sup> Clayton and Heard, 321, 392.

<sup>38</sup> Hamill interview. Also James Goff, Jr., personal interview with Les Beasley, Greenville, South Carolina, August 12, 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Stanley, 98.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>41</sup> J. D. Sumner with Bob Terrell, *The Life and Times of J. D. Sumner* (Nashville: By the Authors, 1994), 126.

<sup>42</sup> Staten, 95-99. See also Guralnick, *Last Train*, 47-48, 78.

<sup>43</sup> Staten, 97. A variant of this quote from Presley appears in Farren and Marchbank, *Elvis*, 29-30.



A group of young people, probably from Texas, singing hymns in 1915.

# A Short History of Congregational Song in the Assemblies of God

By Bodie Gilbert

**I**t has often been said that there are two books for the Christian — the Bible and the hymnal. The Bible is the all-authoritative revelation of God, and the hymnal is the collective response of Christians to God. For many years in the evangelical world, the Bible and the hymnal, as a pair, were the dynamic duo of Christian devotion. While modern trends have de-emphasized the use of the hymnal or song-book, the rich history of Christian music and theology may be found on their pages.

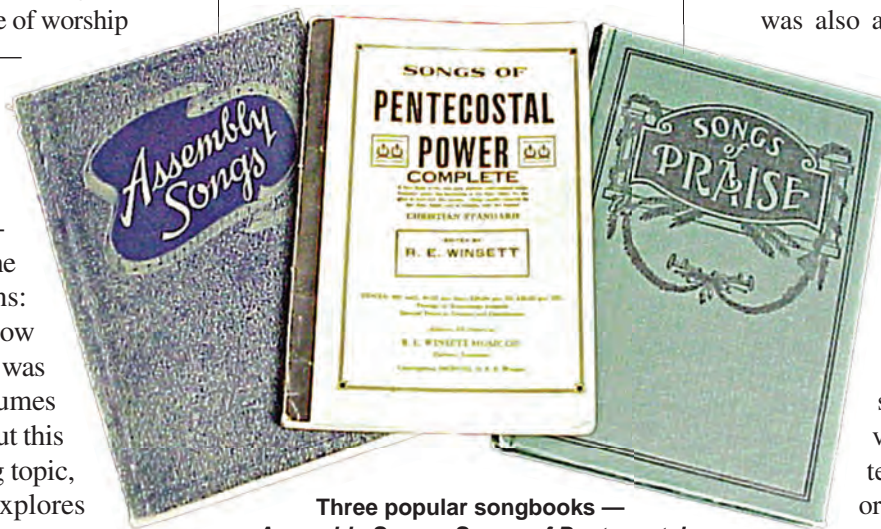
The distinctive testimony of the Assemblies of God is reflected in its hymnody. The music of the Assemblies of God is like a dialect of a greater language — the language of worship to God. This dialect — our heritage — is a great one.

This survey of Assemblies of God hymnody in the United States considers the following questions: what was sung; how was it sung; and why was it sung. Though volumes could be written about this broad and interesting topic, this article briefly explores Assemblies of God hymnals and songbooks and how they contributed to the life of our churches and our heritage of congregational song.

### Our First Congregational Songbook (1924)

“They are Here — The New Song Books For the Assemblies of God ... Lets all Sing from the Same Book.”<sup>1</sup> So reads the full-page announcement in the August 23, 1924 issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel*. This was the long-awaited declaration, a call to unified worship that heralded a new day for Assemblies of God music ministries through the first denominationally-authorized songbook, *Songs of Pentecostal Fellowship* (1924). Until that time, local assemblies used various songbooks obtained from numerous compilers and publishers. Early issues of the *Pentecostal Evangel* show that multiple songbooks produced by R. E. Winsett were sold by the Gospel Publishing House and provided some sense of musical uniformity in the Fellowship during its formative years. Additional

songbooks were available from John T. Benson, Thoro Harris, and others. However, *Songs of Pentecostal Fellowship*



Three popular songbooks — *Assembly Songs*, *Songs of Pentecostal Power*, and *Songs of Praise*.

*ship* was the first work that drew congregations to a more denominationally unified repertoire.

*Songs of Pentecostal Fellowship* was a collaborative effort that was first born in the hearts of early ministers and laypersons and then voiced officially at the 1923 General Council. Delegates adopted a resolution to commission a special committee to work with the Gospel Publishing House (GPH) to create a new, distinctly Pentecostal songbook.<sup>2</sup> The resulting songbook contained 233 selections that included many new and familiar gospel songs, some traditional Protestant hymns, and a few special solo, duet, and choral numbers. This was the first attempt to produce a songbook carrying the message and witness of the Assemblies of God. *Songs of Pentecostal Fellowship* established a foundation on which later denominational songbooks were modeled.

During the late 1920s two other songbooks were made available. *Songs of*

*Truth and Power* with 175 selections, using shaped notes, was compiled by R. E. Winsett, but published by GPH. *Songs of Light and Life*, with 165 songs was also advertised in 1926 and

1927, but no copies of this songbook have been located.

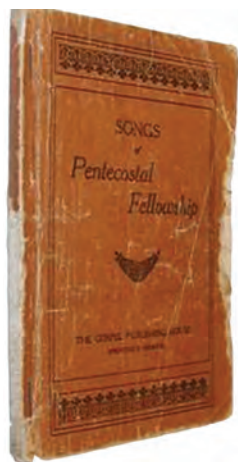
### Period of Growth (1930s-1940s)

During the 1930s and 1940s, the Gospel Publishing House made significant efforts to provide churches with better musical materials in order to meet the needs of the growing denomination. The economic downturn of the Great Depression and

the stresses of World War II seemed to add greater conviction to the songs of the Assemblies of God. As the years progressed, the GPH *Book Catalog* added many new musical publications, including songbooks for soloists and ensembles desiring to offer “special music” for their congregations. Volumes on song leading, church piano method, and stories of Christian hymns and hymn writers also appeared for sale. A greater emphasis was given to music in worship through these years.

*Spiritual Songs* (1930) with its 261 selections was the second official songbook.<sup>3</sup> Built upon the same vision as *Songs of Pentecostal Fellowship*, *Spiritual Songs* appears to have been a better organized and thoughtful effort.

In a 1930 article in the *Pentecostal Evangel*, the book’s editor, Arthur Graves, described the vision for *Spiritual Songs*: “a songbook which would combine the best songs sung throughout Christendom, with the best Full Gospel songs.”<sup>4</sup> Greater emphasis was given to songs that celebrated the Pentecostal doctrines of salvation, divine healing, the second coming, and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. An abridged version



*Songs of Pentecostal Fellowship* (1924)

of *Spiritual Songs* was produced under the title *Evangel Songs* (1931) with 104 selections and served as a less expensive option for use in camp meetings, revival services, Sunday schools, and smaller churches.

Several years later, *Songs of Praise* (1935), a larger collection of 328 selec-

GPH musical publications. By far the largest congregational songbook published by GPH, it included 703 sections. More traditional features such as responsive readings, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments were included — a first for Assemblies of God congregational materials.

The most popular successor to *Songs of Praise* was a songbook titled *Assembly Songs* (1948). The familiar advertisement was revised: "For the Church that Wants the Best...Assembly Songs."<sup>9</sup> In comparison to *Songs of Praise*, this book is found to be much the same in content but with some new gospel

## In 1956, an announcement was made of the creation of the Music Division at the Gospel Publishing House. It was an exciting day for the music ministries of the Assemblies of God.

tions, was published. The work was described as "a new songbook containing your favorite songs, both old and new."<sup>5</sup> This popular songbook remained in print through the 1940s as the premier congregational song resource for the Assemblies of God, with a full-page advertisement boasting: "For the church that wants the best ... *Songs of Praise*."<sup>6</sup> It also should be noted that *Songs of Praise* was the first GPH publication to include the beloved hymn "Amazing Grace."

Other songbooks made an appearance. *Revival Choruses* (1935), compiled by Benjamin A. Baur, offered 160 new and familiar congregational choruses and served as a companion to the other books. *Gospel Choruses* (1937), also compiled by Bauer, provided churches with a second volume of 101 fresh choruses. *Heart Melodies* (1939) offered 65 songs for "old time Pentecostal Camp Meeting rallies" and a sprinkling of some "snappy choruses."<sup>7</sup> *Full Gospel Songs* (1941) contained 251 songs, "a sparkling selection of the choicest gospel songs," and highlighted new material by "the popular song writer, Haldor Lillenas," an active Church of the Nazarene church musician of the day.<sup>8</sup>

*Glorious Gospel Hymns* (1946) was a significant departure from previous



*Glorious Gospel Hymns*

is the first songbook published by the Gospel Publishing House that may be adequately defined as a "hymnal" as features were organized more by doctrinal and ceremonial emphasis with headings such as "Baptism," "Healing," "Communion," and "Invitation."

Still, *Glorious Gospel Hymns* did not originate in Pentecostal circles. It was a reprint of the Church of the Nazarene hymnal of the day, originally produced by Haldor Lillenas and published by the Nazarene Publishing House. As the hymnal was more expensive in cost and more traditional in fashion than other GPH songbooks, it may have been considered less desirable by many Assemblies of God congregations. Even so, the appearance of this hymnal suggests the desire by some during those years for a more traditional form.

songs and traditional hymns, 312 total selections. New to this songbook were the added selections under the "Children's Songs" heading and a category of selections for "Youth." Also, new selections are found under the "Solos and Special Music" category. *Heritage* readers may recall the songbook's more modern logo and outside cover with a distinctively youthful script font title encircled by a flowing musical staff, cloth bound in blue with emblem stamped in gold.

### The Golden Years (1950s)

The 1950s were significant years of development for the denomination. Growth in all areas of the Fellowship was apparent as the American lifestyle was invigorated by prosperity and an overall spirit of gratefulness. With the introduction of the G.I. Bill, more of our constituency attained a college-level education. A growing involvement with the National Association of Evangelicals was also a source of strength. With the blessings of financial resources, stronger education, and ecumenical cooperation, the music ministries of the Assemblies of



Edwin P. Anderson, former music editor

God flourished. Naturally, the Gospel Publishing House grew to accommodate the needs of the growing churches and denominational ministries.

In 1956, an announcement was made of the creation of the Music Division at the Gospel Publishing House. It was an exciting day for the music ministries of the Assemblies of God as Edwin “Eddie” Anderson accepted the leadership of this new division. Under Anderson’s direction, the Fellowship experienced a strong period of musical development.

Many significant advances were to the credit of Anderson, such as a choral anthem series, vocal solo and ensemble collections, instrumental arrangements, and many other resources. Anderson also understood the need for education and fellowship among church musicians, as plans were made to create a Music Minister’s Bureau and a National Music Conference. It was during this period that we see the titles “Music Director” and “Minister of Music” first being more widely used in our churches. This was a time of

great creativity and administrative development for the denomination.

Anderson’s most notable work was the publication of the next major songbook, *Melodies of Praise* (1957). With 341 selections, it was the first GPH songbook to be published in both round note and shaped note editions, as previous GPH books were only offered in round notes.<sup>10</sup> Gospel songs were still the main fare with some added traditional hymns as well. Another significant feature of *Melodies of Praise* was its 210 instrumental orchestrations, available in separate volumes. For the first time, church instrumentalists could participate in the accompaniment of song services with the aid of properly transposed notation. The congregational songbook was well received and became a bestseller for the Music Division.

Other congregational singing materials were later released. *Revival Melodies* (1958), with 100 songs, was a chorus book suitable for camp meetings, district councils, revivals and similar gatherings. *Evangelistic Melodies* (1959) also served as a smaller option for camp meetings and revivals. With its 70 selections, it replaced other small songbooks

previously offered. *Gospel Melodies* (1961), similar to *Melodies of Praise*, served as a more condensed volume containing fewer entries, 255 in all. The most distinctive quality of *Gospel Melodies* was the citation of Scripture passages printed beneath the titles of each song. This feature received special mention in Anderson’s foreword: “We believe that the songs will be more

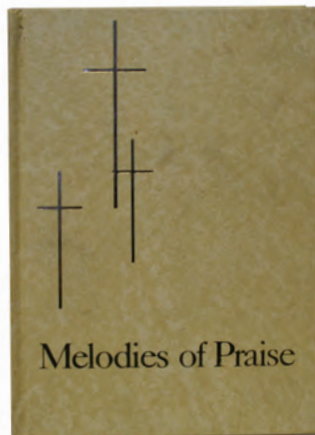
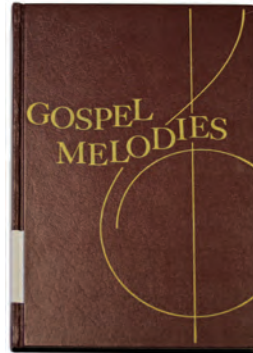
meaningful and bring greater blessing to those who use them when they realize that the selections are related to Scripture.”<sup>11</sup> As an added feature, the companion orchestrations for *Melodies of Praise* were compatible with many selections found in *Evangelistic Melodies* and *Gospel Melodies*, indicating Anderson’s thoughtful organization and foresight.

*Melody Choruses* (1963) was a companion chorus book, printed for use alongside the congregational songbook. Of its 164 titles, five are marked by asterisks with the note “entire song available in sheet music from the Gospel Publishing House.” Encouraging the use of choruses in worship, Anderson’s foreword offers some suggested guidance to the local church: “Due to the fact that people love to sing choruses, a ‘Chorus Time,’ consisting of five or ten minutes during a service could prove very enjoyable.”<sup>12</sup>

### Our First Congregational Hymnal (1969)

In 1967 Edwin Anderson resigned his post as music editor to return to the evangelistic field, and the next chapter of musical development unfolded as plans were set for the first congregational hymnal to originate from within the Fellowship. Under the leadership of newly-appointed editor Dorothy Kirschke, a committee was formed of the top Assemblies of God musical leaders to develop a new hymnal. A liturgical order reminiscent of mainline churches was not the goal. Instead, they strove to provide a more refined musical resource with songs and hymns to better fit with our maturing doctrinal statement of theology and ceremonial celebrations.

*Hymns of Glorious Praise* was released in 1969. The work contained 504 selections, each categorized under





**Dorothy Kirschke, former music editor**

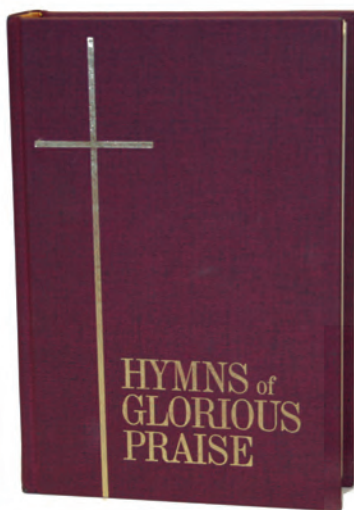
the headings “Worship,” “The God-head,” “The Lord Jesus Christ,” “The Holy Spirit,” “Divine Healing,” “Second Coming of Christ,” “Heaven,” “The Word of God,” “The Church,” “The Gospel,” “Evangelism,” “Missions,” “Christian Life,” and “Special Occasion” such as water baptism, infant dedication, and others. The “Solos and Special Music” heading and its repertoire, commonly found in former books, was discarded. Though a large margin of gospel songs were retained, many more standard hymns were included than in previous songbooks. Corporate Scripture readings, fifty-seven in all, were also included and organized under similar subject headings. A collection of orchestrations was arranged for each hymn number, and arrangements were considered more ornate in style than the former orchestrations of *Melodies of Praise*. Though some scoffed at the new hymnal as a move toward

“lifeless tradition,” most appreciated the efforts of the Gospel Publishing House and loyally supported the hymnal in sales.<sup>13</sup>

#### The Transitional Years (1970s-1980s)

After Dorothy Kirschke’s tenure as music editor, the institution underwent a period of change. Funding for the Music Division of the Gospel Publishing House was transferred to the newly-established National Music Department under the Division of Church Ministries. With this realignment, departmental duties were better administrated in cooperation with the other executive offices of the Assemblies of God National Headquarters. Lawrence B. Larsen was appointed in 1971 to serve as the department’s first secretary.

During the 1970s, the face of church music began to experience great change. American society was undergoing some radical transformations and the Church was not far from its cultural effects. It was during these years that folk and popular musical styles were introduced in many churches and new models were considered



for music ministry. Rhythm bands and amplified instruments were introduced to the Fellowship. Many congregations desired a more youthful sound. As Assemblies of God churches turned to other publishers for musical resources, GPH produced fewer music publications.

Under Larsen’s leadership, at least four major works were released. Three of these were chorus books. *Sing Unto the Lord* (1973), with 65 songs, was a nice blend of traditional hymns and gospel chorus-

es. *Let Everybody Sing* (1975) offered 154 selections and was the first GPH publication to include chord symbols for guitars and rhythm instruments. The spiral-bound *Choruses and Scripture Songs* (1982) and its 206 selections also included chord symbols. These works may be viewed as an appeal to the younger generation as chord symbols and folk-like Scripture songs were definitive phenomena of the period.

#### The Call for Moderation (1990s-present)

Responding to the Assemblies of God’s mission to be an evangelistic people, musical tastes continued to evolve through the final decades of the twentieth century. Many churches sought “seeker-sensitive” music, which often included more contemporary musical styles. With the advent of overhead projection and the ever-growing repertoire of songs, singing from the hymnal soon became a tradition of the past in many congregations. In a very rapid fashion, the pendulum had swung from the right to the left, leaving many seasoned church leaders concerned over the state of church music.

Lawrence Larsen’s final project as National Music Secretary was the preparation of a new hymnal for the Assemblies of God.<sup>14</sup> Almost twenty years had passed since the release of *Hymns of Glorious Praise*. With this project, a new vision was set forth to offer the Fellowship a more balanced approach to congregational singing. A steering committee was formed with various subcommittees, and with great planning and forethought the innovative work began.

The final product, *Sing His Praise* (1991), continues to serve our congregations to this day. For the first time in Assemblies of God history, the three styles — traditional hymn, gospel song and chorus, and praise and worship song — were all found together in a single denominational hymnal.

The new hymnal was well construct-

ed. The 588 selections are arranged under the same category headings as the former hymnal, observing our Pentecostal doctrines and celebrations. The body of hymns is followed by a section of sixty-nine Scripture readings,

will bless us today, but also what will bless us tomorrow. In my judgment, the hymnal is unsurpassed for that part of our musical heritage.”

But over the past two decades, the modern worship song has become

latest trends are now the forms most widely embraced.

The Future of Church Music

It is a true joy to remember our musical heritage. We remember the

**“I believe it’s time for our churches to take a look at their music. Let’s not use just what will bless us today, but also what will bless us tomorrow. In my judgment, the hymnal is unsurpassed for that part of our musical heritage.”**

— *Richard Champion*

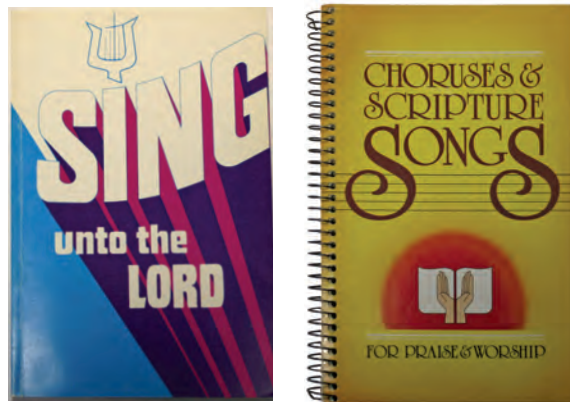
also with headings similar to the former hymnal. Unlike *Hymns of Glorious Praise*, with readings meant for corporate unison, the Scripture readings of the newer volume are printed to accommodate a responsive gesture — the worship leader reading a line of text and the congregation speaking sections indicated by a bold font.

Another interesting feature of the hymnal is its references to hymn tune names and the poetic meter. Tunes that appear in different keys are cross-referenced. As a companion to the hymnal, *Sing His Praise Orchestrations* (1993) offers many unique fea-

tures, including choral obbligatos, percussion and rhythm arrangements, and a full conductor’s score. Arrangements are considered more accessible than in the previous volume.

In spite of the hymnal’s moderate approach and varied content, it was not known just how the project would be received. Church leaders voiced greatest concern for the younger generations and their lost heritage of hymnody. In a timely editorial published in the September 6, 1992, *Pentecostal Evangel*, Richard Champion shared a word of admonition: “I believe it’s time for our churches to take a look at their music. Let’s not use just what

the norm in most Assemblies of God churches. Though the Gospel Publishing House still offers its denomination the standard hymnals, musical tastes



and ministerial philosophies more often have given favor to the newest emerging styles in Christian music.

Many churches find themselves somewhere in the middle, attempting to honor our heritage and embrace the contemporary culture. While hymnals still occupy many sanctuary pew racks, the book itself is rarely put to use in many churches today. Though Assemblies of God worship is still identified by Spirit-filled conviction and passion in singing, the new millennium seems to be progressing in a new stylistic direction. As both the vernacular gospel songs and the cultivated traditional hymns are abandoned, the newest and

past to celebrate God’s faithfulness and His creative hand at work through the lives of our forefathers and foremothers. We also take time to look back on former years to learn from them.

The wise innovator understands that the wheel may be improved upon but needs not to be reinvented. The best progressive action is that which is built upon a foundation of proper historical understanding.

As we progress into this new chapter of history, may we be mindful of educating and investing in our future leaders, teaching them of our musical heritage. We must endeavor to endow the passion of our Pentecostal calling and the beauty of its

distinctiveness to insure the effectiveness of our future church musicians and music ministers. Also, our future senior pastors and church leaders need to be taught the importance of a strong music ministry and what “a strong music ministry” truly is.

Strong education, Pentecostal commitment, and pastoral collaboration will be the key to navigating the uncharted waters of our church music’s future. May the elder generations be ever prayerful for our developing leaders and their duty to carry on our message through song.

As for the congregational song of the Fellowship, may we continue to



L. B. Larsen (left), secretary of the Music Department, talks with visitors at the music booth at the Council on Spiritual Life in Minneapolis in 1972.

*Minutes of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, 1923, 60.*

<sup>3</sup> Earlier scholarship identified this publication as the Assemblies of God's first songbook. See William Menzies, *Anointed to Serve: The Story of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1971), 350.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur H. Graves, "The Story of Our New Pentecostal Songbook," *Pentecostal Evangel* (March 22, 1930), 9.

<sup>5</sup> "Songs of Praise," item description, *Book Catalog for the Gospel Publishing House* (1935-1936), 67.

<sup>6</sup> "For the Church that Wants the Best," full-page advertisement, *Catalog for the Gospel Publishing House* (1943-1944), back inside cover.

<sup>7</sup> "Heart Melodies," item description, *General Catalog for the Gospel Publishing House* (1939-1940), 118.

<sup>8</sup> "Full Gospel Songs," item description, *General Catalog for the Gospel Publishing House* (1942-1943), 155.

<sup>9</sup> "For the Church that Wants the Best," full-page advertisement, *General Catalog for the Gospel Publishing House* (1948-1949), back inside cover.

**We have quite a history as a Pentecostal people — a singing and worshipping people. May this beautiful dialect, our heritage, continue on for the glory of God!**

mold it and share it with Scriptural integrity and Spirit-filled conviction. May our song continue to inspire as it remains an ever strong tool of worship and adoration, teaching us right doctrine and displaying the character of our God. May our song forever be an authentic expression of our promise in the Name of Jesus Christ and the empowerment of His precious Holy Spirit. We have quite a history as a Pentecostal people — a singing and worshipping people. And a promising future awaits us as our inheritance as we remain faithful to the call. May this beautiful dialect, our heritage, continue on for the glory of God! ✠



**Bodie Gilbert is a graduate student pursuing the Master of Music in Church Music Studies at Baylor University. He also serves as adjunct instructor of music at Southwestern Assemblies of God University. He is a member of First Assembly of God, Comanche, Texas, where his father serves as pastor.**

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> "They are Here," advertisement, *Pentecostal Evangel* (August 23, 1924), 16.

<sup>2</sup> "New Song Book Authorized," *Combined*

<sup>10</sup> Early songbooks produced by R. E. Winsett and other individuals featured shaped notes and were printed by the Gospel Publishing House, but these were not produced exclusively by or for the Assemblies of God.

<sup>11</sup> "Foreword" from *Gospel Melodies* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), ii.

<sup>12</sup> *Melody Choruses* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1963), ii.

<sup>13</sup> Darrel Keith Johnson, "A Study of Present-Day Music Practices in the Assemblies of God," master's thesis. (University of Southern California, 1972), 61-62.

<sup>14</sup> Bodie Gilbert, oral history interview with Lawrence B. Larsen, June 19, 2007.



# Rosendo Alcantara: Still Ministering at 106

By Glenn W. Gohr

**R**osendo Alcantara, the oldest minister in the US Assemblies of God, turned 106 on February 27<sup>th</sup>. Until recently, he was teaching a weekly Bible study and preaching at King's Cathedral, Kahului, Hawaii, where he is associate pastor emeritus under Dr. James Marocco.

Remembered as one of the pioneers of the AG in the Philippines and as the founder of the AG Filipino ministry in Kahului, his zeal for God and his continued faithfulness are an example to emulate. He says the secret for his long life are three things: prayer, the Word of God, and a healthy diet.<sup>1</sup>

Born in Aringay, La Union, Philippines, Alcantara moved to the United States at the age of twenty and found work in San Jose, California. He was in an accident that left him pinned beneath his car, and in desperation he called on God to deliver him.<sup>2</sup> Within a few seconds, a carload of men stopped and freed him. They took him to a nearby hospital where emergency surgery was needed, and he saw firsthand how God answers prayer.

After his release from the hospital, he stayed with some friends at nearby Sunnyvale to recuperate. He was invited to a Pentecostal church, and the third night he attended, he saw a vision of Christ clothed in white. Immediately he realized he was a sinner and needed salvation. He began crying out to God, and he told the people about his vision. They led him to the altar where he accepted salvation. A couple weeks later he received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

Later he moved to Los Angeles, and with a zeal to serve God, he became convinced that God had called him to preach. He enrolled in correspondence courses and was granted an exhorter's license from the Southern California-Arizona District of the AG. He began preaching to Filipinos in Southern California.<sup>4</sup>

After preaching a sermon at Bethel Temple, Los Angeles, he received enough money through a love offering to pay for his fare to the Philippines. He witnessed to his parents and others in his hometown, and he began evangelizing and planting churches in



**Rosendo Alcantara (left) and Presentacion, his wife of 62 years.**

various places. When the Philippines District Council of the AG was formed in 1940, Alcantara received ordination and became assistant superintendent.

During World War II, he worked with the late Rudy Esperanza and other Filipinos to hold the believers together, although gospel work was risky. Alcantara borrowed money from a wealthy Dr. Manznilla and used it to buy food and milk for people in the internment camp. Three times a week he would risk his life to bring food. A Japanese guard almost shot him when he showed up one day with milk goats. But when he discovered he was a preacher, the guard let him continue.<sup>5</sup> Other times were just as dangerous.

On October 28, 1945, Rosendo Alcantara married Presentacion Tadena, a member of his church at Dingras. In 1948, the Alcantaras took charge of a Bible school in Santa Catalina, Ilocos Sur. They stayed until 1953, when they joined Lester Sumrall in Manila, taking charge of a Filipino congregation, which grew and became strong. In 1965, Dan and Esther Marocco became missionary pastors at Bethel Temple in Manila. They worked hand-

in-hand with Pastor Alcantara for 15 years as he worked among Filipinos and helped to start churches in the surrounding areas.

In late 1980, Dr. James Marocco, son of Dan and Esther, asked the Alcantaras if they would consider heading up a ministry to Filipinos at First Assembly of God in Maui (now King's Cathedral), even though Rosendo was almost 80 years old. They gladly agreed and were able to make arrangements to come in January of 1982, staying 7 months until their visas expired. They returned in March of 1983 and have been ministering in Maui ever since.

Hawaii District Superintendent George Nagato says of Alcantara, "You were born into the Kingdom of God at age 20, and since then you have opened churches, led Bible Schools, and established fellowships both in the Philippines and Hawaii. We commend you for your passion in building His Kingdom around the world. To this day, you touch many lives with whom you connect as you minister at King's Cathedral under Pastor James Marocco."<sup>6</sup>

*Heritage* wishes Reverend Rosendo Alcantara a blessed happy birthday as he celebrates 106 years of life and more than 86 years of ministry. 🌸

---

**Glenn W. Gohr is reference archivist and copy editor for the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.**

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jennifer McClure, "105-Year-Old Filipino Pastor Still Visits Pulpit," *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*, July 8, 2007, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Trinidad E. Selek, "Six Filipinos and One American: Pioneers of the Assemblies of God in the Philippines," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4:1 (2001): 124-125.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Rosendo Alcantara, "Surviving the War in the Philippines," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 11:4 (Winter 1991-92): 6.

<sup>6</sup> George Nagato, congratulations letter to Rosendo Alcantara, January 2008.



Pandita Ramabai



Cornelia Jones  
Robertson

# Known and Yet Unknown

## Women of Color and the Assemblies of God

By Jessica Faye Carter

**T**he history of ethnically diverse women in the Assemblies of God is unique, rich, and lengthy, yet it remains largely unknown to many Assemblies of God adherents. Starting before the formal inception of the Assemblies of God in 1914, and continuing through the mid-twentieth century into the present day Assemblies of God, women of color have provided a significant influence on the Fellowship in a variety of ways. They have served as evangelists and preachers, pastors and teachers, sectional and district presbyters, missionaries, and as an overseas general superintendent.

### Pandita Ramabai

Pandita Ramabai, an Indian educator and missionary, was born in about 1858 to Ananta Shastri, a Sanskrit scholar, and Lakshmbai, her mother. Ramabai was born a member of the Brahmin (priestly) caste, and her upbringing was unusual in that her father believed in the education of women, unlike many of his day.<sup>1</sup> As a result, Ramabai was

taught Sanskrit, the language in which classical Hindu works are written. She also became adept in the languages of Marathi, Kanarese, Hindustani, and Bengali.<sup>2</sup>

Through tragedy (Ramabai lost both parents to illness) and famine, Ramabai eventually came to Calcutta, where a group of Hindu scholars were astonished at her knowledge. They allowed her to be called Pandita, which means “learned,” and at the time she was the only woman allowed to be



Pandita Ramabai (left center) with some members of her staff. Her daughter, Manoramabai (sitting at right of her mother); Minnie Abrams (front, center); and Mr. Gadre (front, right).

referred to as such.<sup>3</sup> Ramabai began holding meetings related to women’s rights, with word of her abilities even reaching as far as England.<sup>4</sup>

Ramabai was first exposed to Christianity in India,<sup>5</sup> though she converted to Christianity and was baptized in England.<sup>6</sup> Ramabai’s contributions to global Christianity and to Pentecostalism are quite significant. She was a champion of women’s rights, campaigning extensively against child-brides and speaking against her society’s terrible treatment of widows. Part of Ramabai’s work for Indian women included the establishment of the Mukti Mission in 1889 — mukti means salvation<sup>7</sup> — as a place for young widows to come who were being abused by their families. In addition to her activities with women, she added Hebrew and Greek to her cache of languages, eventually translating the Bible into Marathi.

Minnie Abrams, a missionary, had come to India from Minneapolis, Minnesota two years earlier in 1887, and she was very concerned for the plight of Indian women.<sup>8</sup> In 1899, while preaching itinerantly in India, Minnie Abrams “felt directed of the Lord” to work at the Mukti Mission, and



Maria de Fatima  
W. Gomes



Aimee Garcia Cortese



Maria Khaleel

Ramabai accepted her offer.<sup>9</sup> Ramabai and Abrams worked together, and eventually a significant Pentecostal revival began in Southern India.

As Abrams held meetings in the United States to support the Mukti Mission, she made important connections with the North American Pentecostal



Minnie Abrams (right) sitting next to Jivubai, an Indian woman.

movement, and recruited women baptized in the Spirit to join in the evangelistic work. Among the women who joined her were Edith Baugh, Blanche Cunningham, Lillian Doll, Minnie Houck, “Miss Bristol,” and “Miss Dempster.”<sup>10</sup> Ramabai referred to these women as the “Philipus Class,” because the women were like Philip’s daughters in Acts 21:9.<sup>11</sup> Other women from the US later joined their efforts, and several of these women eventually ministered with or joined the Assemblies of God.<sup>12</sup>

#### Lucy Farrow

Lucy Farrow, an African-American woman, was the niece of the abolitionist Frederick Douglass,<sup>13</sup> and she

served as pastor of a church in Houston, Texas.<sup>14</sup> During her tenure as pastor, in 1905, William Seymour attended her church and heard her speak in tongues. Harvey Cox, in *Fire from Heaven*, notes that

[Seymour] heard a woman pray aloud in a language, or in what seemed to be a language, that no one there could understand. Seymour was touched to the core.... After the meeting he asked Lucy Farrow, the woman who had spoken in the strange tongue, more about her remarkable gift.<sup>15</sup>

Farrow was well-acquainted with Charles Parham and his wife Sarah, and she worked as a governess in their home. She is said to have introduced Parham and Seymour. Eventually Farrow went on to Los Angeles where she ministered and became part of the 1906 outpouring of God’s Spirit.

Farrow returned to Houston in 1906 to preach at a camp meeting,<sup>16</sup> where she prayed for people



Howard Goss at a camp meeting in 1912. He began speaking in tongues after Lucy Farrow prayed for him.

to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and laid hands on them. One of those for whom she prayed was Howard Goss. Goss had been baptized in the Holy Spirit prior to the camp meeting, but had been unable to speak in tongues since his initial experience.<sup>17</sup> By his own account, after Farrow laid hands on him he was able to speak in tongues “any time [he] yielded to the Spirit of God.”<sup>18</sup> Goss, along with E. N. Bell and others, hosted a conference in Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1914; out of this conference, the Assemblies of God was established.

#### Cornelia Jones Robertson

Cornelia Jones Robertson was an African-American woman pioneer in the Assemblies of God. She was active in the Azusa Street revival,<sup>19</sup> and she was one of the first African-Americans to be ordained by the Assemblies of God, receiving her credentials in its Northern California-Nevada district in 1923.<sup>20</sup> Robertson was active and well-known in Pentecostal circles, and was known to be a “close associate” of prominent Pentecostal evangelists Maria Woodworth-Etter and Aimee Semple McPherson.<sup>21</sup> She pastored a church in Oakland, California and was the founder and pastor of the Emmanuel Pentecostal Church and House of Prayer located in San Francisco, California for over 30 years. Robertson

also engaged in US missions, starting a mission in the Barbary Coast area.<sup>22</sup>

One of the most important aspects of her enduring legacy is found in her grandson, Robert Harrison. As a young man, Harrison was influenced heavily by the faith of his mother, Leona (Schaeffer) Harrison, and Robertson, his grandmother.<sup>23</sup> After his graduation from Bethany Bible College, he applied for credentials in the same district where his grandmother held credentials, but he was refused.<sup>24</sup> After being recruited by Billy Graham for his crusade team, Harrison's ordination by the Assemblies of God was approved in 1962.<sup>25</sup> His ordination was a watershed event and marked a departure from the Assemblies of God's official position as of 1939, which refused to grant further ordinations to African-Americans at the national level, though in practice some districts continued to issue district-level credentials.<sup>26</sup> Harrison's ordination eventually led to the official condemnation of racial, ethnic, and other forms of discrimination by the Assemblies of God in 1965.<sup>27</sup>

### Aimee Garcia Cortese

Aimee Garcia Cortese is the founder and pastor emeritus of Crossroads Tabernacle, and of The Boden Center for the Performing Arts, both located in New York City. Cortese was born in 1929 in the Puerto Rican barrio of the South Bronx in New York City,<sup>28</sup> but her ministry has spanned many different nations and people groups. Cortese was raised in a loving religious family, and by the age of 15 expressed her calling to ministry to her pastor, Manuel López.<sup>29</sup>

Her pastor did not believe that women should preach, but allowed her to do so because of her incessant requests. However, because she had received no ministry training, her first attempt at preaching was disastrous.<sup>30</sup> Afterwards, López began helping her learn the Bible to prepare for ministry.<sup>31</sup> Over time, Cortese was involved in many different ministry roles, being

licensed with the Assemblies of God in 1951, then ordained in 1964 by the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Puerto Rico. She transferred back into the Assemblies of God and served as a missionary-evangelist among Spanish-speaking people in the US and abroad. She was also the first woman chaplain for the New York State Department of Corrections.<sup>32</sup>

Her vision for the church was as an active part of a vibrant Christian community, including community centers and gymnasiums for youth.<sup>33</sup> To that end, Cortese founded Crossroads Tabernacle and The Boden Center for the Performing Arts. Both are in the Bronx area near real crossroads — the Hutchinson River Parkway and Cross Bronx Expressway — and are impacting people at the crossroads in their lives.

### Maria de Fatima W. Gomes

Maria de Fatima W. Gomes is of East Indian and Portuguese descent and currently serves as the general superintendent of the Assemblies of God in East Timor.<sup>34</sup> East Timor is a country located in Southeast Asia, and includes the eastern half of the island of Timor.

Gomes was born in Indonesia in 1928. As a young woman she was hostile to Christianity and rejected the faith, even throwing Christians out of her house! But the grace of God prevailed. In 1968 several pastors began to pray for her, and she eventually received Christ as her Lord.<sup>35</sup> Later that year she and her late husband (José Gomes) began their ministry on the island of Auturo, a small island situated north of East Timor.<sup>36</sup> Auturo, though physically separated from Timor, is politically situated in the Dili district of East Timor.

Gomes knew the ministry in Auturo

was going to be very difficult, because it was then an island with virtually no technological advancement, widespread illnesses, and very little food. She was not anxious to go and minister there, but eventually she and her husband followed God's call. For seven years they ministered there, only moving to Timor during political unrest.<sup>37</sup> One major initiative that they oversaw involved the provision of biblical teaching cassettes and cassette players to illiterate local pastors. This ministry helped many budding Christian leaders learn Christian doctrine, and it strengthened many churches in the geographic region.<sup>38</sup>

In 1990, José Gomes died, but prior to his death he felt the Lord directing him to appoint Maria as superintendent of East Timor, then part of Indonesia.<sup>39</sup> When East Timor gained independence in 2002, Maria became the general superintendent of the Assemblies of God in East Timor. It is possible that she is the only female to have served

as the leader of one of the national fellowships within the Assemblies of God. She continues serving in this role and lives in East Timor.

Despite her considerable hardship and personal challenges, she has remained faithful to her commission from

God. Today the fruit of the Gomes' ministry has appeared for all to see. The island of Auturo is known by the locals as "Assemblies of God island" because 5,768 out of the 7,000 people on the island (82 percent) are adherents to the Christian faith through the Assemblies of God.<sup>40</sup>

### Maria Khaleel

Maria Khaleel is a widely respected pastor and former presbyter in the Assemblies of God Peninsular Florida district. Khaleel, who is of multicultural



**Maria Gomes (right) shares a relaxed moment with a pastor's wife.**

descent, is the founder and senior pastor of New Life Assembly of God, a sizeable congregation in Pembroke Pines, Florida. She graduated from South-eastern College of the Assemblies of God in 1986, and she was ordained in 1998. Since starting the church, Khaleel earned a master of divinity degree from the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary (2002), and she served as a presbyter in the Peninsular Florida District from 1998-2006 — the first woman to hold such a position in that district.

New Life has 700 members, with 30 nationalities being represented in the congregation. A whopping 80 percent are first-time converts to Christianity. Even more remarkable is that each year, approximately 35 percent of the congregants move away from the Pembroke Pines area, so that the city effectively serves as a “gateway” to many entering the US. Some who leave the Pembroke Pines area return to their homelands; others move on to various locations within the US.

Therefore to maintain a stable membership size, the church has to win about 245 people to Christ each year — and this is a challenge they have met. Since its inception in 1992, New Life has led over 5,000 people to Christ.

Khaleel’s ethnic heritage is almost as ethnically diverse as that of her congregation. Her mother is Cuban (of Spanish and French ancestry), and her father is Lebanese. Even more interesting is that her parents met in Jamaica, West Indies where she was also born, though most of her upbringing occurred in Oklahoma. Khaleel’s exposure to myriad cultures and people groups uniquely suits her to lead such an effective multicultural congregation.

## Conclusion

Women of color have made substantial contributions to the Assemblies of God, and they will continue to play an important role in its future ministry. The pioneers have laid the groundwork for the ministry efforts of ethnically

diverse women in the Assemblies of God for those continuing in leadership today. Though obstacles to women in ministry persist — especially for women of color — the dedication, resilience, and perseverance of these women have set an example of service to God for fellow Christians and for leaders throughout the Assemblies of God. ✨



**Jessica Faye Carter is a master of divinity candidate at Princeton Theological Seminary and is an intern with Nassau Christian Center (Assembly of God) in Princeton, New Jersey. She is a graduate of Spelman College and holds a J.D. and an M.B.A. from Duke University, where she served as editor-in-chief of the *Duke Journal of Gender Law & Policy*. Jessica is the author of *Double Outsiders: How Women of Color Can Succeed in Corporate America* (JIST Works, 2007).**

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Helen S. Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai: The Story of Her Life* (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1900), 13-14.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> “Pandita Ramabai,” *Glimpses*, No. 133 (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute, 2007).
- <sup>6</sup> “Pandita Ramabai: Her Life in India and Lessons to Be Drawn From It,” *The New York Times*, Saturday Review of Books and Art (March 23, 1901): BR20.
- <sup>7</sup> Gary B. McGee, *People of the Spirit: The Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2004), 73.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> Gary B. McGee, “Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire! The Revival Legacy of Minnie F. Abrams,” *Enrichment* 3:3 (Summer 1998): 86.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 149.

<sup>14</sup> Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995), 49.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Ethel E. Goss, *The Winds of God* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1977), 98.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Glenn W. Gohr, “For Such a Time as This: The Story of Evangelist Bob Harrison,” *Assemblies of God Heritage* 24:3 (Fall 2004): 6.

<sup>20</sup> McGee, *People of the Spirit*, 362; Glenn W. Gohr, “Cornelia Jones Robertson: A Friend of the Needy,” *SpiritLed Woman* 7:1 (August/September 2004): 58.

<sup>21</sup> Gohr, “For Such a Time as This,” 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> McGee, *People of the Spirit*, 362.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 363; *General Council Minutes, 1965*, 60-61.

<sup>28</sup> Virginia Sánchez Korrol, “In Search of Unconventional Women: Histories of Puerto Rican Women in Religious Vocations before Mid-Century,” *The Oral History Review* 16:2 (Autumn 1988): 47-63.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-61.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>34</sup> Katy Attanasi, “Prepared Through Hardship,” *Pentecostal Evangel* 4522 (Jan. 7, 2001): 20.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

# LIBERATED and EMPOWERED:

## The Uphill History of Hispanic Assemblies of God Women in Ministry, 1915-1950

By Gastón Espinosa

**T**here is a small but growing body of literature on the important roles of Anglo-American and Black Pentecostal women, but less is known about the history and contributions that Hispanic women have made to Pentecostalism. Furthermore, the little that has been written on Hispanic women in religion has tended to focus on Catholicism or mainline Protestantism with a few notable exceptions.

Women did play an important role in the origins and development of the Hispanic Pentecostal movement, which is the largest segment of Hispanic Protestantism today. The Hispanic Churches in American Public Life national survey in 2003 found that 23 percent of all US Hispanics self-identified as Protestant or “other Christian” and that 64 percent of these Hispanic Protestants in the US are Pentecostal or charismatic.<sup>1</sup>

This article examines the origins and early history of Hispanic Pentecostal clergywomen in the Assemblies of God. The study suggests that although the Latin districts of the Assemblies of God trace their roots to a meeting in South Texas in 1915, only one year after the General Council of the

Assemblies of God was founded in Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1914, the Latin districts took a very different trajectory concerning the role of women in the ordained ministry in the twentieth century than did the parent organization.

While the Assemblies of God has licensed or ordained Hispanic women to serve as evangelists, missionaries, and pastors since at least 1916, it never witnessed the kind of Golden Age of women in ministry that Charles Barfoot and Gerald Sheppard describe in their germinal article, “Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion: The Changing Role of Women Clergy in Classical Pentecostal Churches.”<sup>2</sup>

The history of Hispanic women in ministry is long but checkered. Hispanic women have faced an uphill struggle. Pentecostal women have practiced a kind of paradoxical domesticity whereby they are exhorted to be end-times prophetesses<sup>3</sup> in the public sphere and devoted mothers and good wives in the private sphere.

Despite the seemingly paradoxical lives they lead, Pentecostal women are, by their own accounts, “liberated.” In general, the Trinitarian Hispanic Pentecostal movement has adopted a more

prophetic attitude (meaning an openness to women preachers and leadership over men) toward women in ministry that has been shaped by the degree of institutional acculturation, education, and cultural orientation to US values and gender roles. As the cultural orientation of Hispanic Pentecostalism has changed, so too has its attitude towards women in ministry.

### The Beginnings

The practice of ordaining women in the Latin districts of the Assemblies of God is an outgrowth of the larger Assemblies of God fellowship’s position on women in ministry. The Assemblies of God takes a prophetic view of women in ministry and has always allowed women to be ordained to the ministry, although Edith Blumhofer has noted some of the limitations that women have faced nonetheless.<sup>4</sup>

The founder of the Latin American District Council, Henry C. Ball, adopted this prophetic view of women in ministry when he began his work in south Texas. On July 4, 1915, he introduced nine Mexicans to the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Ricardo, Texas.<sup>5</sup> This event gave birth to what later became the Latin American District Council of the Assemblies of God in the US.<sup>6</sup>

The first Assemblies of God women to effectively minister among Hispanics



**H. C. and Sunshine (Marshall) Ball, pioneers in Hispanic ministry.**

in the United States were Anglo-Americans. Alice E. Luce, Sunshine Marshall (later the wife of H. C. Ball), Florence Murcutt, Carrie Judd Montgomery, and many others ministered to Hispanics in



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 (2<sup>nd</sup> row, far right), Juan Lugo, Domingo Cruz, Luis Caraballo, S. Nevarez, George Blaisdell, and L. Rodriguez.

the US Southwest, Texas, Mexico, and Puerto Rico from 1912 to the 1940s. The most important Anglo-American woman to pioneer the work among Hispanics in the US was Alice E. Luce. A former British Anglican missionary to India, Luce was converted to Pentecostalism in India and later felt called to minister to Spanish speakers in Mexico and the United States.

In 1915, Luce and her friend Sunshine Marshall met Henry C. Ball in south Texas and were ordained to the ministry. They, like Ball, were interested in ministering to Mexicans and had planned to set up a Pentecostal work in Monterrey, Mexico. After the bloody Mexican Revolution (1911-1917) drove them back across the US border, they returned to



**Alice E. Luce, a former missionary to India, ministered among Hispanics in Mexico, Texas, and Southern California. She established what is now Latin American Bible Institute in La Puente, California.**

San Antonio and began to help Ball with his evangelistic work among the Mexicans living in South Texas.

Luce pioneered the Latin District Council work in Los Angeles in 1918 where she rented a hall in the Mexican Plaza District in Los Angeles, where Rosa and Abundio López of Azusa Street revival fame had preached twelve years earlier. Luce began conducting evangelistic services along with a Jewish convert named Florence Murcutt. Their work was difficult, not only because Mexicans followed the seasonal harvests, but also because the Oneness group, *Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús* (Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, Inc.), had already established itself in south-

ern California and was reportedly undermining their work.

Despite the difficulties she faced as a pioneer Anglo-American woman ministering in Mexican Los Angeles, Luce conducted open-air evangelistic services and Bible studies, prayed for the sick, organized testimonials, taught Sunday school, and led door-to-door evangelism and tract ministries. Luce represents one of the clearest examples of a prophetic woman in ministry in early Pentecostalism.

### Pioneers

Alice Luce, Sunshine Marshall Ball (Mrs. H. C.), and other Anglo-American women like Aimee Semple McPherson (who held credentials at one time in the Assemblies of God) served as role models for Latina Pentecostal women in ministry. Although they laid a foundation for women's prophetic ministry, the number of Hispanic women that have followed their exam-

ple has been, until recently, relatively small. Despite their small numbers and in contrast to the Barfoot/Shepherd thesis<sup>7</sup> of a Golden Age of women in the early Pentecostal ministry, the documentary evidence indicates that there have always been ordained Hispanic women actively ministering in the Assemblies of God.

The first Latina we know for certain who was ordained by the Assemblies of God was Dionicia Feliciano. She and her husband Solomon were ordained in California in July 1916. She went on to help pioneer the Assemblies of God work in California, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. She was joined in her evangelistic work in Puerto Rico by Isabel Lugo, who herself was ordained in 1920.<sup>8</sup>

Isabel and Juan Lugo and Solomon and Dianicia Feliciano pioneered the Assemblies of God work in Puerto Rico in 1916. Ball, Marshall and Luce's work with Rodolfo Orozco in the American Southwest, Texas, and northern Mexico in 1915, resulted in



**Demetrio and Nellie (Treviño) Bazán in 1920.**

*Enviados de Dios*, wrote regular articles for *La Luz Apostólica* (a publication started by H. C. Ball in 1916 which later became the official publication of the Latin American District Council), composed poetry, and raised ten children. She herself planted three churches in Texas and New Mexico during her 75-year ministry. While she was allowed to exercise her prophetic ministry on a regular basis, she was also

another pioneer evangelist, Francisca D. Blaisdell (ca. 1885-1941), who worked in Arizona and northern Mexico. The Mexican American Blaisdell began preaching the Pentecostal message in Mexico in 1915 and was later ordained an Assemblies of God missionary-evangelist by Ball and Juan Lugo in 1923. She, along with her Anglo-American husband, Rev. George Blaisdell, pioneered evangelistic work along the Arizona-Mexican border in Douglas, Arizona, and Nacozari, Sonora, Mexico.

Around 1922, Francisca helped organize the first women's group in Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico.<sup>10</sup> She is important not only because she was one of the first evangelists to pioneer the Pentecostal work in the US and Mexico, but also because she pastored churches in Douglas, Arizona; Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico (1932-1933, 1938-1939); and El Paso, Texas (1933-1935). In these churches, she preached to 40-80 Mexican parishioners every Sunday morning and evening and two

**While there have always been strong female voices within the Hispanic Assemblies of God, they have faced an uphill calling and have often been assigned small, remote, or what some might see as marginal ministries.**

the ordination of a number of Mexican American women such as Nellie Bazán, Francisca Blaisdell, Chonita Morgan Howard, Natividad Nevarez, and others. Most of these women worked alongside their husbands and served as copastors.

Manuelita (Nellie) Treviño Bazán (1898-1995) was one of the first Mexican American women to be ordained to the Pentecostal ministry in the United States. Like many other husband-wife teams, both she and her husband were ordained together in 1920. She ministered along with her husband Demetrio in Texas, New Mexico, and Colorado, where she regularly preached from the pulpit at least 30 times a year and conducted door-to-door evangelistic work. She also wrote her own autobiography,

expected to submit to her husband's spiritual authority at home.

As at the Azusa Street revival itself, women's roles in the Hispanic Assemblies were somewhat paradoxical — women were exhorted to exercise their prophetic gifts<sup>9</sup> in the public sphere but submit to their husband's authority in the private sphere of the home. Early Hispanic Pentecostals did not believe the point of the prophetic gifts was to erase gender distinctions, but rather to empower men and women for Christian service in the end-time drama in which they found themselves actors. This kind of paradoxical domesticity has remained the norm for many Hispanic Pentecostal women throughout the twentieth century.

Nellie Bazán was soon joined by

or three times a week. Along with her regular work in Arizona and Mexico, she conducted evangelistic tours, often by horseback, throughout northern Mexico and the US Southwest.<sup>11</sup>

Like Francisca Blaisdell, Concepción (Chonita) Morgan Howard (1898-1983) was a Mexican American whose father was an Anglo-American and whose mother was a Mexican.<sup>12</sup> Chonita was converted to Pentecostalism in 1913 in the small mining town of San José de las Playitas, Sonora, Mexico. She was a pioneer Latina Pentecostal evangelist, pastor, and women's leader in the US and Mexico. Not long after her conversion and baptism in the Holy Spirit in 1913, she felt called to the ministry and traveled the dusty evangelistic trail on horseback in northern



Mexico and Arizona preaching the Pentecostal message.

She eventually traveled to California where she came under the influence of George and Carrie Judd Montgomery, who had attended the Azusa Street revival in 1907 and were responsible for bringing the Pentecostal work to Sonora. Under their influence, she began evangelistic work in the US around 1915. In 1919, she met and married a young Anglo-American Pentecostal preacher named Lloyd Howard, who was pastoring a small group of Mexicans in the border town of Pirtleville, Arizona. In 1928, the Assemblies of God recognized her evangelistic work and ordained her as an evangelist to the Mexicans living along the Arizona-Mexican border.

In addition to her pastoral and evangelistic work, she served as the second president (after Sunshine Marshall Ball) of the *Concilio Misionero Femenil* (Women's Missionary Council) from 1941 to 1962. Chonita conducted pioneer evangelistic work in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Sonora, Mexico, from 1915 to 1968. From 1966 to 1968, she pastored Betel Asamblea de Dios in Douglas, Arizona. Her fifty-three year pioneer ministry touched the lives of thousands of Hispanic women and helped establish the Assemblies of God work on both sides of the US-Mexican border.

Although most of the women during the early period were credentialed as evangelists, there were cases of Hispanic women actually ordained as pastors. Natividad Nevarez, for example, was ordained a "pastor" in 1937 in Los Angeles, where she served as copastor of the famous Aposento Alto church. María Inostroza was ordained in the early 1930s and pastored churches in the 1940s and 1950s.

The pioneer evangelistic work of Mexican American and Anglo-Amer-

ican women in the US served as a source of inspiration to Pentecostal women in Mexico. Ana Sanders was one of the first women to pioneer the Assemblies of God work in Mexico City in 1921. She dedicated the rest of her life pioneering the work in Mexico. By 1928, her prophetic work along with that of Chonita Howard, Francisca Blaisdell, and others inspired Mexican women like Srita Cruz Arenas, Catarina García, Juana Medellín, and Raquel Ruesga to go into the ministry. Together, these women



**Carrie Judd  
Montgomery**

helped pioneer the Assemblies of God work in Mexico.

### Acceptance

Despite the fact that Hispanic women have been ordained in the Assemblies of God since at least 1916, prior to World War II it was uncommon for a single Hispanic woman to pastor her own church or even be ordained to the pastoral ministry. More often than not, women were licensed rather than ordained and served alongside their husbands, as interim pastors, or as pastors of small congregations or missions, often in rural or marginal areas. While other Hispanic women were ordained from 1916 to the 1970s in low numbers, there was a sharp increase in the number of ordained women in the Hispanic Assemblies of God beginning in the early 1980s. The exact reason for this shift is unclear. There is little doubt, however, that the progressive tendency of a new generation of leaders like Jesse Miranda has much to do with this trend.

Congruent with Edith Blumhofer's findings,<sup>13</sup> while the Latin districts in the Assemblies of God have officially ordained women for most of the twentieth century, ministry opportunities were limited. Women who did pastor churches often did so in small churches or missions where men were unwilling to go. While these moves can be inter-

preted as genuine gestures of gender and racial inclusivity, they can also be interpreted as a safe way to theoretically include women that would never be a real threat to the male leadership of the Assemblies of God because they could never garner the nationwide support needed to be elected or make any serious structural changes.

### Theological Education

Women in the Assemblies of God have not only been allowed to exercise their preaching and leadership roles in the credentialed ministry, they have also been able to receive ministerial theological training traditionally closed to them in all Catholic and Orthodox and many Protestant denominations in the US prior to the 1950s. The theological and ministerial training that women received at the two Latin American Bible institutes,<sup>14</sup> as well as other Bible schools operated by the Assemblies of God, has opened many otherwise closed doors to the ministry with opportunities to teach at these same institutes and to write for Spanish-language periodicals such as *La Luz Apostolica* and *The Word*.

The Assemblies of God Bible institutes have provided Hispanic women an alternative professional route to the normal option of mothering by giving them the opportunity to acquire theological training and nurture and to eventually exercise their prophetic gifts alongside men. While the career options after graduation were limited, they nonetheless exercised a certain level of agency that would have been otherwise unavailable to them in the *Asamblea Apostólica* (Apostolic Assembly) or in most other Protestant denominations prior to the 1950s.

While some used their Bible school training to exercise their gifts of evangelism and pastoring, the majority of women who attended Bible school became copastors, Christian educators, and lay leaders in the church. Regardless of whether or not they used their Bible training, the

fact that women could and did receive the same training for the ministry as men allowed women to nurture their prophetic gifts despite the problems they encountered in the Latin districts.

### Conclusion

This investigation into the early years of Hispanic Pentecostal women in ministry has only scratched the surface of an important chapter in the story of Pentecostal clergywomen. While there have always been strong female voices within the Hispanic Assemblies of God, they have faced an uphill calling and have often been assigned small, remote, or what some might see as marginal ministries that men were less interested in pioneering. Despite this fact, Hispanic women have generally stayed the course and continue to quietly and skillfully negotiate their own ministries and space in the Pentecostal movement by practicing a kind of a paradoxical domesticity.

Hispanic Pentecostal women heartily believed (and still believe) that the message of repentance, forgiveness, and a born-again, Spirit-filled relationship with Jesus Christ constitute true liberation. Far from being “doormats” suffering from a false consciousness, early Pentecostal women believed they found real freedom despite the problems they faced. If we take seriously how most of these Hispanic Pentecostal women perceived themselves, then they were by their own account “liberated” and “empowered.” Although there were clear limitations to their “freedom in Christ,” their stories nonetheless challenge conventional interpretations of women and religion, historical agency, and what it means to be a truly liberated woman. ✨

**For additional information, see the author’s article, “Your Daughters Shall Prophesy”: A History of Women in Ministry in the Latino Pentecostal Movement in the United States,” in *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism*,**

**Margaret Lamberts Bendroth and Virginia Lieson Brereton, eds. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 25-48.**



**Gastón Espinosa, Ph.D., is assistant professor of philosophy and religious studies at Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, California. Inquiries may be sent to [gaston.espinosa@cmc.edu](mailto:gaston.espinosa@cmc.edu)**

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Gastón Espinosa, Virgilio Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda, *Hispanic Churches in American Public Life: Summary of Findings* (Notre Dame, IN: Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame, 2003), 16. For trends and the history of Latino Pentecostalism see: Gastón Espinosa, “The Pentecostalization of Latin American and US Latino Christianity,” *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 26:2 (Fall 2004): 262-292; Gastón Espinosa, “Ordinary Prophet: William J. Seymour, Race Relations, and the Azusa Street Revival,” in *The Azusa Street Revival and Its Legacy*, Harold D. Hunter and Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., eds. (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2006), 1-41; Gastón Espinosa, “‘The Holy Ghost Is Here on Earth’: The Latino Contributions to the Azusa Street Revival,” *Enrichment* 11:2 (Spring 2006): 118-125; and Gastón Espinosa, “Brown Moses: Francisco Olazábal and Mexican American Pentecostal Healing in the Borderlands,” in Gastón Espinosa and Mario T. García, eds., *Mexican American Religions: Spirituality, Activism, and Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 263-295, forthcoming essay.

<sup>2</sup> Charles H. Barfoot and Gerald T. Sheppard, “Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion: The Changing Role of Women Clergy in Pentecostal Churches,” *Review of Religious Research* 22 (1980): 2-17.

<sup>3</sup> Prophetess in this context refers to a woman preacher in a leadership position.

<sup>4</sup> Edith L. Blumhofer, “The Role of Women in the Assemblies of God,” *Assemblies of God Heritage* (Winter 1987-88): 13-17.

<sup>5</sup> Victor De Leon, *The Silent Pentecostals: A Biographical History of the Pentecostal Movement Among the Hispanics in the Twentieth Century* (Taylors, SC: Faith Printing Company, 1979), 43.

<sup>6</sup> The Latin American District Council of the Assemblies of God, officially recognized as a district in 1925, has grown so large that it now has been divided into eight separate districts: Central Latin American District, Gulf Latin American District, Midwest Latin American District, Northern Pacific Latin American District, Puerto Rico District, Southeastern Spanish District, Southern Pacific Latin American District, and Spanish Eastern District.

<sup>7</sup> Barfoot and Sheppard, 2-17.

<sup>8</sup> Dionicia Feliciano, ministerial file; Gastón Espinosa, “‘Your Daughters Shall Prophesy,’” 35; David Ramos Torres, *Historia de la Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal, M.I.* (Rio Piedras, PR: Editorial Pentecostal, 1992), 46.

<sup>9</sup> Prophetic in this context, as well as in the rest of this article, refers to the concept of women preachers in leadership positions (including leadership over men).

<sup>10</sup> De Leon, 144-145.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-148; Chonita Morgan Howard, ministerial file; For more on Latinas in ministry see Gastón Espinosa, “Nellie Bázan,” “Francisca Blaisdell,” “Aimee García Cortese,” “Juanita García Peraza,” “Chonita Morgan Howard,” and “Leoncia Rosseau Rosado” in *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, eds. Rev. and expanded ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 368, 432, 562-563, 659, 907-908, and 1029.

<sup>13</sup> Blumhofer, 13-17.

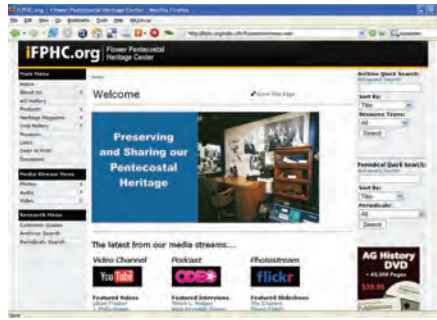
<sup>14</sup> Many of the Hispanic women who trained for ministry attended one of two Assemblies of God schools named Latin American Bible Institute (LABI). One is in La Puente, California, and one is in San Antonio, Texas. Both schools were established in 1926.

## ▶ Pentecostal Research Goes Web 2.0

On February 15, 2007, the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center launched its upgraded website, [www.iFPHC.org](http://www.iFPHC.org), which employs the latest popular technologies to share the stories of the pioneers and innovative ministries that shaped the Assemblies of God and the broader Pentecostal movement. The FPHC's online research center, already the world's largest Pentecostal history website, has added many web 2.0 features. For instance, web surfers will find streaming videos of Lillian Trasher, a photo slideshow of the Azusa Street revival, and other audiovisual experiences that they can paste into their own church website, blog, or PowerPoint lecture or sermon.

The FPHC also has a presence in the blogosphere through its two new blogs: the iFPHC blog and iFPHC Seen in Print. The iFPHC blog is the interactive news hub of the FPHC, designed to inform and foster community. iFPHC Seen in Print aims to make accessible information about books written by or about Christians within the Pentecostal and charismatic traditions.

The FPHC accomplished this using inexpensive or free social networking tools, such as YouTube, Flickr, Odeo, Digg, Wordpress, and other folksonomic services. Brett



**New Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center website: [www.iFPHC.org](http://www.iFPHC.org)**

Pavia, project manager for the website upgrade, explained, "Using popular content aggregators is less costly than developing one's own technologies. It also means that the FPHC will continue to be on the cutting edge, and it places the FPHC squarely in the center of where the next generation is already getting its information."

The FPHC's online research center, which debuted in 2000, has become an essential reference tool for many church leaders, educators, students, pastors, and other researchers. The upgraded website continues to offer

free access to the FPHC's significant online resource library, including:

- Over 200,000 pages of digitized, indexed periodicals (including the *Pentecostal Evangel*, *Assemblies of God Heritage*, and other early publications);
- Over 60,000 entries in the FPHC's catalog to its archives; and
- Over 17,000 digitized photographs.

For those unable to visit the FPHC in Springfield, Missouri, copies of materials in the FPHC's vault may be ordered by using the FPHC's online shopping cart.

According to Director Darrin Rodgers, "Few traditional archives have been able to jump the digital divide and to place their resources into the flow of this information age. It is our goal — not only with this website, but in all that we do as archivists and historians — to make the wisdom and experiences of different ages and cultures accessible to people today."



**The FPHC was honored to have a delegation from the Church of God in Christ in Memphis, TN, among its many guests in 2007. Pictured here are Sister Magnolia Tolbert, FPHC Director Darrin Rodgers, COGIC National Archivist Dr. Odie Tolbert, and Mother Mary P. Patterson, widow of former Presiding Bishop J. O. Patterson.**

## ▶ 2007 Acquisitions

The Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center acquired numerous books, booklets, tracts, photographs, audio and visual recordings, artifacts, and other exciting historical treasures from donors in 2007. Among the highlights were donations from several congregations with recent centennial celebrations: First Assembly

of God (Findlay, OH); First Christian Assembly (Cincinnati, OH); Stone Church (Palos Heights, IL); First Assembly of

God (Eureka Springs, AR); and First Assembly of God (Memphis, TN).

*Continued on page 66*

# The Assemblies of God *and the Long Journey toward* Racial Reconciliation

By Darrin J. Rodgers

**F**ew could recall a more electrifying moment at a General Council. “Assemblies of God get ready, get ready, get ready,” an impassioned Zollie Smith said moments after the announcement of his election as the new executive director of US Missions. “We together are going to invade America and we are going to go into the cities and the highways and byways and take back what the devil has taken away.” Ministers and delegates present at the 2007 General Council in Indianapolis, joined by thousands of online viewers, could sense that they were witnessing a historic event. With his election, Smith became the first African-American to serve as a national executive of the US Assemblies of God.<sup>1</sup> Ten years earlier, in 1997, John Bueno had become the first non-Anglo to serve as an executive.<sup>2</sup> The elections of Bueno and Smith reflect the changing face of the Fellowship — which is becoming more racially diverse — but it also underscores that it took 93 years to get to this point.



Zollie Smith

This article analyzes the historical roots of racial unity and disunity in early Pentecostalism and in the Assemblies of God. Because the concept of racism carries varied connotations, it is helpful to first differentiate between its various forms. Church of God in Christ historian Leonard Lovett has identified three forms of racism:

- 1) individual (personal belief in the superiority of one race over another);
- 2) institutional (structural discrimination to achieve racist goals); and

3) cultural (one culture is privileged over another).<sup>3</sup>

The history of the inclusion of racial minorities in the Assemblies of God can be broken down into four time periods. During each period the official actions of the denomination demonstrated certain attitudes toward racial minorities. The period from 1914 to 1939 was marked by cultural racism. The Assemblies of God was formed as a largely-white organization where non-Anglos were present as a minority.

The culture, language, and attitudes of the white founders were privileged. The period from 1939 to 1962 demonstrated both cultural and institutional racism. In 1939, the denomination created a national policy that denied ordination to African-Americans. This structural discrimination persisted until 1962, when the policy was overturned.

Cultural racism still existed during the period from 1962 to 1997. Although official actions at the national level no longer reflected racial discrimination, there was still a seeming preference

for whites that created a glass ceiling. While racial segregation was not prescribed, the leadership remained overwhelmingly white. In 1997, the Assemblies of God modified its governance structure to purposely include representatives of its non-Anglo constituency. Because the glass ceiling had been broken, the period from 1997 to the present could be described as not exhibiting any form of racism, at least in official actions at the national level.

### Interracial Origins

The Azusa Street revival (1906-1909), which was one of the focal points of the emerging Pentecostal movement, became widely known for its interracial character. One hundred years ago, both friends and foes of the revival recognized that the racial reconciliation practiced at the Azusa Street mission and promoted by its African-American leader, William J. Seymour, had become a lightning rod, if not a defining mark of the revival. Azusa participant Frank Bartleman famously exulted that at Azusa Street “the ‘color line’ was washed away in the blood.”<sup>4</sup>

Critics of the Azusa Street revival seemed most appalled by its interracial mixing. Alma White, a fundamentalist leader, spared no fire in her invective against the fledgling Pentecostal movement. She seethed that it was “very fitting that the devil should choose a colored man (Seymour) to launch out the ‘Tongues’ movement ... There is no other race through which the Dragon could work more effectually than through the colored race.”<sup>5</sup> Azusa Street became a symbol for racial reconciliation — an ideal that Pentecostals have experienced difficulty living up to.

The Assemblies of God was organized in 1914 by about 300 pastors, evangelists, and missionaries. Most, if not all, of these founding men and women were white. However, at least one featured group was African-American. Charles H. Mason, the respected bishop of the largely-black Church of

God in Christ, brought his choir from Memphis to sing. Mason, preaching in an evening service, graciously asked God to bless the newly-formed General Council of the Assemblies of God. Chairman E. N. Bell, reporting on the service, identified Mason as “a real prophet of God.”<sup>6</sup>

Ministers of other races soon joined the ranks of the General Council. In 1915, the Assemblies of God issued credentials to its first black minister — Ellsworth S. Thomas, a pastor in Binghamton, New York.<sup>7</sup> That same year, Henry C. Ball, a former Methodist cleric, received credentials with the Assemblies of God and proceeded to pioneer a Hispanic Assemblies of God congregation in Kingsville, Texas. Ball proved to be an energetic evangelist and, in 1918, he organized the first convention of Spanish-speaking pastors (the Latin American Conference, renamed the Latin American District in 1925).<sup>8</sup>

Assemblies of God ministers and churches from additional ethnic and language groups followed suit, organizing numerous ethnic or language-based conventions — named districts, branches, and fellowships. Today, most of the growth in the US Assemblies of God is occurring among its Hispanic, Korean, African-American, and other non-Anglo churches, as well as in congregations in which no one culture is dominant.

The history of racial unity and division within the Pentecostal movement was addressed in a recently-published book: *We’ve Come This Far: Reflections on the Pentecostal Tradition and Racial Reconciliation* (Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2007), edited by Byron Klaus. This volume raises important questions about the Assemblies of God’s mixed record on race.<sup>9</sup>

*We’ve Come This Far* contains the proceedings of a 2006 lecture series at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary that encouraged reflection about the “missed opportunities and unfulfilled potential” for the Assemblies of God to be an agent of racial reconcili-

***We’ve Come This Far* is available from AGTS (417-268-1055)**



ation. The volume notes that the Assemblies of God — like many predominantly-white Pentecostal denominations

— “has experienced some challenges in acknowledging its multicultural roots,” as well as its “years of ambiguity about the inclusion of African-Americans in its ministerial ranks.”<sup>10</sup>

William Seymour and Martin Luther King, Jr.

*We’ve Come This Far* juxtaposes the lives of two notable twentieth-century American religious leaders — William J. Seymour and Martin Luther King, Jr. — while reflecting on the lessons that can be drawn from them concerning African-American preaching and leadership. The book also features a selection of historical materials — including an account of Assemblies of God minister Robert Harrison (whose successful ministry with Billy Graham led to the overturn of a policy denying ordination to African-Americans) and a history of the struggle to overcome racism within the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa.

Three essays, authored by David D. Daniels, III, Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, and Lois E. Olena, are of particular value in understanding the historical roots of racial unity and division in the early Pentecostal movement and in the Assemblies of God. Daniels, a leading Church of God in Christ historian, and Robeck, the foremost authority on the Azusa Street revival, explored possible lessons from the leadership legacies of Seymour and King.

On the surface, Seymour and King might not appear to have much in common. Seymour was a leader in the early Pentecostal movement, which



**William J. Seymour**

in its infancy was known for its otherworldliness, while King helped to lead the modern Civil Rights movement, with its protest politics, campaigns for desegregation, and non-violent active resistance. Indeed, some African-American veterans of the Civil Rights movement viewed Pentecostal churches with suspicion, contending that their preoccupation with spiritual matters precluded them from correcting social injustices.

The African-American Pentecostal community did lend support to the Civil Rights struggle, although the degree to which it did so is debatable. Notably, King’s final sermon — shortly before his assassination in 1968 — was delivered at Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee. Mason Temple is the mother church of the Church of God in Christ, which is the largest African-American Pentecostal denomination in the world.

David Daniels, significantly, identified King as a successor to Seymour’s interracial vision. Daniels lauded Seymour for “erasing the boundaries between black and white, challenging white supremacy as a cultural phenomenon through a new racial formation as well as interracial and multicultural worship.” He also cautioned against anachronistically measuring Seymour against

the leaders of the modern Civil Rights movement — which occurred fifty years after the Azusa Street revival.<sup>11</sup>

Robeck noted that Seymour demonstrated leadership through becoming a vulnerable servant. He enumerated three ways in which Seymour did this. First, Seymour brought together a gifted, multiracial staff and did not try to make the revival a one-man show. Second, Seymour opened his pulpit to anyone who had a word to give, which empowered a variety of voices within the young Pentecostal movement. Third, Seymour acknowledged his personal debt to Charles Parham, the man who taught him about the “Apostolic Faith.” This acknowledgement was at great personal cost to Seymour, as Parham later condemned Seymour, in part for his interracial vision.<sup>12</sup>

The Azusa Street mission has become a symbol for racial reconciliation. It can be tempting to hold up the Azusa Street revival as an ideal, but actual events are usually messier than later ideological interpretations of them. Most people do not realize that Seymour, in 1914, led the mission to limit leadership roles at Azusa Street and its daughter congregations to “people of Color.” Whites were still allowed to attend the mission — just not participate in mission business. This compromise, according to Robeck, was to keep the “peace” on an interim basis, since racial fighting in society had found its way into the Azusa Street mission as well.<sup>13</sup>

Others have pointed to earlier racial conflict at the Azusa Street mission. Several historians of Hispanic Pentecostalism have documented Seymour’s expulsion of a Mexican contingent from the Azusa Street mission in about 1909 or 1910, suggesting possible racial motives.<sup>14</sup> Robeck, however, convincingly argued that Seymour was simply disciplining a disorderly faction. It just so happened that they were Mexican.<sup>15</sup>

Robert Harrison

William Seymour, in an apparent concession to human frailty, felt that he had to conform to the racial structures of his day in order to survive in the short-term. It should not be surprising, then, that the Assemblies of God also struggled with racial issues. Olena documented this struggle through the lens of Robert Harrison, one of the most prominent African-American Assemblies of God ministers.<sup>16</sup>

Born in 1918 in San Francisco, California, Harrison had a strong Assemblies of God pedigree. His grandmother, Cornelia Jones Robertson, was an Azusa Street participant and, in 1923, she became one of the earliest African-Americans ordained by the Assemblies of God. Upon Harrison’s 1951 graduation from Bethany Bible College — an Assemblies of God school in northern California — he applied for credentials with the Northern California-Nevada District, but his request was denied on the basis of his race.<sup>17</sup>

Harrison’s rejection came in the midst of a lengthy soul-searching odyssey concerning the place of African-Americans in the Assemblies of



**Robert Harrison**

God. In the first several decades of the Fellowship, no national policy existed regarding race in the credentialing process. Some districts issued credentials to African-Americans; others did not. However,

concern that an African-American credentialed in one district would then move into a district that did not accept African-Americans caused the General Presbytery to consider the issue. In 1939, the body voted to:

express disapproval of the ordaining of colored men to the ministry and

recommend that when those of the colored race apply for ministerial recognition, license to preach only be granted to them with instructions that they operate within the bounds of the District in which they are licensed, and if they desire ordination, refer them to the colored organizations.<sup>18</sup>

This decision seemed to allow the licensure, but not ordination, of African-Americans. In practice, however, districts interpreted and applied this policy as each saw fit. Harrison's application for a ministerial license was denied in 1951. However, one year later, another African-American minister, Bruce Gibson, was re-instated as an ordained minister in the New York-New Jersey District. He had been ordained by the Northwest District in 1933 before leaving in 1937 to work with an African-American group. In 1957, a new district superintendent in the Northern California-Nevada District apologized to Harrison for his past mistreatment and issued Harrison credentials as a licensed minister.<sup>19</sup>

As civil rights activists agitated for equal rights and as racial tensions increased in the post-war years, Assemblies of God leaders found themselves torn between competing social visions for America.<sup>20</sup> While some national leaders, such as Ralph Riggs, were eager to open the door to African-Americans to minister in the Assemblies of God, this idea was met with opposition in the South.<sup>21</sup> Because of these tensions, the leadership of the Assemblies of God decided to prevent a split in the Fellowship by delaying ordination of African-Americans until it became more acceptable in society.<sup>22</sup>

It was not until 1962 that the denomination finally began issuing ordinations without regard to race. This institutional paralysis on the issue of race came to an end in part because Harrison landed a high-visibility position on the Billy Graham

ministry team. The Assemblies of God wanted to fully embrace Harrison as its own, so then-General Superintendent Thomas F. Zimmerman helped to push through a change in official policy.<sup>23</sup> Olena noted that Harrison's ordeal was "a sad and shameful chapter of Pentecostal history."<sup>24</sup>

### Race and AG Origins

One of the most controversial and poorly understood aspects of race in Assemblies of God history concerns the relationship of the Church of God in Christ to the founding of the Assemblies of God. Some claim that the Assemblies of God split from the Church of God in Christ, undoubtedly due to racism. Two scholars recently explored this issue and came to differing conclusions.

Joe Newman, in his provocative new book *Race and the Assemblies of God*, charged that "racial separation ... was apparently the dominant factor in the creation of the Assemblies of God church."<sup>25</sup> His argument was twofold: 1) many founders of the Assemblies of God left the largely African-American Church of God in Christ; and 2) their departure was racially motivated.<sup>26</sup>

Erik Hjalmeby disagreed with the assertion that the Assemblies of God was formed for racist reasons. For his master's thesis at Baylor University, Hjalmeby studied the racial rhetoric surrounding the formation of the Assemblies of God and concluded that the majority of founders of the Assemblies of God "were by no means guilty of racial hatred, at least not overtly."<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the most powerful evidence that racial separation was not the motivation for the organization of the Assemblies of God is that Bishop Mason was invited to preach at the first General Council and that he gave his blessing to the organization of the Assemblies of God. It is quite remarkable, given the location and era, that Mason and the founders of the Assemblies of God crossed the color line. Indeed, Donald

Weeks, in his unpublished history of the Church of God in Christ, wrote, "I want to make it perfectly clear, that in the archives of the Assemblies of God or from any other materials I gathered, there is no sign of personal racism found in the founders of the Assemblies of God."<sup>28</sup>

What was the motivation, if not racism, for the founding of the Assemblies of God?

The founders gave a five-fold purpose for calling the first General Council: unity, conservation of the work, provision for missionaries, a legal charter for the churches, and creation of a "general Bible Training School with a literary department for our people."<sup>29</sup> Hjalmeby noted that the driving force behind the first General Council was not racism, but the desire for organization and unity. He noted that most early Pentecostals were very loosely-organized and did not feel strong ties to any over-arching organization. This was why, when the Assemblies of God was formed, its leaders saw themselves as bringing together independent local congregations under one umbrella.<sup>30</sup>

Newman's argument assumed that the founders of the Assemblies of God were members of Mason's organization: "Many members of the new organization possessed ministerial credentials issued by C. H. Mason, African-American leader of the Church of God in Christ. At Hot Springs, the white ministers ended their official relationship with Mason and accepted new credentials with the Assemblies of God."<sup>31</sup> Newman is not alone in his claim. Conventional wisdom holds that the Assemblies of God was formed, in part, by ministers who left Mason's Church of God in Christ.<sup>32</sup>



C. H. Mason

However, a closer examination of the facts suggests a more complex story. There is little, if any, evidence known to exist that suggests that Mason and the founders of the Assemblies of God were once part of the same organization. Instead, they were members of different organizations both using the same name. However, recent scholarship indicates that there may have been an informal relationship between the two groups.

### Pre-organization

Early Pentecostals existed in a bewildering variety of loosely-organized groups. Pentecostal historian Grant Wacker portrayed early Pentecostals as “mavericks at heart, careless of tradition, willing to drop old allegiances at the first hint of strain.”<sup>33</sup> Most were deeply suspicious of organization, instead gathering in independent congregations with impermanent meeting places, supporting what some might call fly-by-night evangelists and missionaries, and constantly evaluating new claims of restored apostolic doctrines and practices. When ministers or congregations did form alliances, they usually had little, if any, structure or authority.

Early Pentecostalism’s freewheeling character and lack of organization brought about a greater exchange of ideas and people between groups that, in a more structured environment, might not have occurred. While “Jim Crow” laws in many states required organizations to be segregated, the lack of denominational structures made it much easier for people of different races to rub shoulders.

For instance, Mack M. Pinson reported that he and H. G. Rodgers heard white evangelist G. B. Cashwell in Memphis in early 1907. After Cashwell left town, they visited Mason’s congregation, where they witnessed a number of people receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. That night, Pinson and Rodgers prayed in their hotel room and spoke in tongues for the first time.<sup>34</sup> Pinson and Rodgers

later became founding members of the Assemblies of God. It is significant that these white ministers from the Deep South were open to attending a black church in their search for spiritual truth. Wacker has noted that there was a great deal of unselfconscious racial mixing at the personal level among the first generation of Pentecostals.<sup>35</sup>

This interracial character of early Pentecostalism was most prominent at the personal level. In the beginning, Pentecostals of many stripes had informal, undefined relationships with each other. When Pentecostals set out to create institutions, then real differences — cultures, organizational expectations, and otherwise — made it difficult for believers from different racial backgrounds to find common ground. Racism, of course, was always a factor, but the roots of racial disunity were more complex than racism alone.

In the early years of the Pentecostal movement, many of the different congregations or associations went by the same name. Following the example of Charles Parham, several prominent early groups went by the name Apostolic Faith, including William Seymour’s Azusa Street mission and Florence Crawford’s denomination in Portland, Oregon. Historian Glenn Gohr noted that, by 1909, a number of former Parham followers began to call themselves “Pentecostal” in order to distinguish themselves from Parham. Then, in the early 1910s increasing numbers began to identify their churches by names found in scripture, such as Assembly of God, Church of God, and Church of God in Christ.<sup>36</sup>

### Churches of God in Christ

Charles H. Mason led one of the largest and oldest Pentecostal groups, a largely African-American body called the Church of God in Christ. Another group, led by Howard A. Goss, Daniel C. O. Opperman, L. C. Hall, and others, was also known as the Church of God in Christ from late 1910 or

1911 until its leaders helped to form the Assemblies of God in 1914. This second group, largely white, will be referred to as the [white] Church of God in Christ in this article.

The [white] Church of God in Christ was one of several groups that contributed to the formation of the Assemblies of God. Most members were located in the South and initially consisted of ministers who held credentials with Parham’s Apostolic Faith Movement. Sometime after mid-1907, a group of ministers left Parham to form their own organization. In late 1910 or 1911, this group began identifying itself as the Church of God in Christ, apparently with the permission of Mason.<sup>37</sup> The latter’s organization was recognized by southern railroads and the use of this name allowed clergy to receive discounted railroad fares.<sup>38</sup>

Another group of white ministers, primarily from Alabama and Mississippi and led by Rodgers, also began using the name Church of God in Christ in 1912 or 1913. The group previously went under the name Church of God. While its history is sketchy, this group seems to have entered into an association with the [white] Church of God in Christ and ultimately its leaders joined the newly-formed Assemblies of God.<sup>39</sup>

Mason’s organization and the [white] Church of God in Christ shared a name — apparently for the purpose of satisfying the Clergy Bureau’s requirements for discounted railway fares. Otherwise, the only known evidence of organizational connections between the two groups comes from unpublished correspondence and notes from J. Roswell Flower,<sup>40</sup> who was never affiliated with the [white] Church of God in Christ. In the early 1950s, Flower corresponded with a number of the early leaders in the Assemblies of God in an attempt to collect and verify historical information for a prospective history of the Assemblies of God that he never did write.

According to Flower’s unpublished notes for a 1950 Central Bible Insti-



tute class, Goss supplied the following information from his diaries:

In the latter part of 1907, H. A. Goss had gone to Arkansas where he met Elder C. H. Mason, the General Overseer of the Newly organized Church of God in Christ. Brother Goss accepted the courtesies of that

and does not demonstrate any ongoing organizational connection between Mason and Goss.

The reliability of Goss's accounts, cited by Flower, is questionable. According to Flower, Goss claimed that the information he gave to Flower came from his diaries. However, Goss's diaries do not seem to corroborate Flow-

these connections were significant in any way, it is strange that no evidence can be found, other than one contested statement made forty years after the fact. Additional research is required to corroborate Flower's statement.

What was the nature of the relationship between Mason and the [white] Church of God in Christ? While the

---

The interracial vision noted by Azusa Street participant Frank Bartleman — where “the ‘color line’ was washed away in the blood” — was never fully realized, whether at Azusa Street, in the Assemblies of God, or in the Church of God in Christ.

---

organization and was issued credentials, which were recognized by the southern railroads. With the consent of Elder Mason, a white organization was formed, using the name “Church of God in Christ” and credentials were issued to E. N. Bell and a few other ministers.<sup>41</sup>

Flower repeated this account in correspondence with Mack M. Pinson:

H. A. Goss did keep a diary and I have gleaned quite a number of facts from him. He received the baptism under Chas. F. Parham in 1903. In the latter part of 1907 he visited Elder Mason of the Churches of God in Christ and received credentials from the negro body. He obtained from Elder Mason permission to issue papers using that name “Churches of God in Christ” for the white work in Texas.<sup>42</sup>

Historians who claim that the [white] Church of God in Christ was organizationally connected with Mason generally cite these two accounts by Flower.<sup>43</sup> No other evidence of an organizational link between Mason and the [white] Church of God in Christ is known to exist. Flower's account only refers to the initial formation of the [white] Church of God in Christ

er's account.<sup>44</sup> Flower's unpublished materials were a work-in-progress; they contained his correspondence and notes about many conflicting and uncorroborated historical accounts. The file containing Flower's letter to Pinson, quoted above, also includes the following response from Pinson, which undercuts Goss's claim:

As to Goss going to Mason, the colored preacher, head of the Church of God in Christ, I don't know about that, but I do know that Arkansas and other Southern States have a “Jim Crow” law that colored and whites can't work under the same charter. If that was done, the whites' Church of God in Christ was not legal because they would have to have a charter of their own.<sup>45</sup>

If the reliability of Goss's account is questionable, so is Pinson's. The conflict between Goss and Pinson is a question of fact, and it may be possible to determine who was correct. Records of the railroad Clergy Bureau, which have not yet been located, might possibly provide documentation of a relationship. If Goss or other [white] Church of God in Christ leaders were ordained by Mason or were otherwise organically connected with Mason's group, and if

answer to that question is unclear, it does seem apparent that they existed as separate organizations.<sup>46</sup> The [white] Church of God in Christ issued its own credentials and elected its own officers. Daniel C. O. Opperman, who orchestrated and directed a number of short-term Bible schools in the South and Midwest, was a member of the Clergy Reference Committee for this group, and he issued credentials to his students to affiliate them with the [white] Church of God in Christ.<sup>47</sup>

Wayne Warner, former director of the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, noted in a 1994 article that he reviewed many of the nearly 100 credentials on file from those who turned in their [white] Church of God in Christ credentials when they applied for a transfer to the Assemblies of God — and Mason's name or organization appeared on none of them. Likewise, extant publications — including *Word and Witness*, edited by E. N. Bell, and *The Whole Truth*, edited by Charles H. Mason — do not give any indication of an organizational relationship.<sup>48</sup> Despite Newman's claim, not a single credential has been found issued by Mason to any Assemblies of God founder.<sup>49</sup>

In order to distinguish it from Mason's organization, in recent decades

scholars have referred to the group led by Goss, Bell, and others as the “Church of God in Christ (white)”<sup>50</sup> or as the “Church of God in Christ and in Unity with the Apostolic Faith Movement.”<sup>51</sup> The term “Church of God in Christ (white)” may cause people to incorrectly assume that only whites belonged to the organization. Its 1914 ministerial roster listed approximately 350 people — including many whose race is unknown — and at least two, Isaac S. Neeley and his wife, Mattie, were black.<sup>52</sup>

The terms “Churches of God in Christ” and “Church of God in Christ and in Unity with the Apostolic Faith Movement” both appeared on the organization’s ordination certificates. It is doubtful that the lengthier, cumbersome term was regularly used by its ministers. The phrase “and in Unity with the Apostolic Faith Movement” most likely served the dual purpose of distinguishing the group from other organizations with the name “Church of God in Christ” while continuing to identify it with the “Apostolic Faith

Movement,” which was the group’s previous name.

While the [white] Church of God in Christ was a separate organization from Mason’s group, recent scholarship has emphasized that an informal or loose relationship may have existed between them. Church of God in Christ historian David Daniels offered an intriguing explanation for the existence of multiple groups with the name Church of God in Christ. He posited that Mason had an interracial vision and attempted to create a “network of fellowships” which included several white groups.<sup>53</sup> Mason’s core group — which published *The Whole Truth* and issued credentials with Mason’s signature — was predominantly African-American.

Daniels included the group led by Goss and Bell in his list of white groups loosely associated with Mason. He based this on three pieces of evidence: 1) Flower’s account citing Goss’s claim that Mason ordained him and permitted the use of the name Church of God in Christ; 2) the use of the name Church

of God in Christ to obtain discounted railway fares; and 3) Mason’s invitation to speak at the first General Council.

Assuming that these facts are true (the first two have been contested by scholars), then Daniels probably was correct in his conclusion that a relationship between Mason and the [white] Church of God in Christ existed. At minimum, Mason’s invitation to speak at the General Council demonstrated that the founders of the Assemblies of God and Mason were not strangers — they knew and respected each other. However, the nature of this relationship is not known or documented.<sup>54</sup>

Daniels identified several other white groups with stronger and historically-verifiable ties to Mason, including ones led by Memphis minister L. P. Adams and by William B. Holt. Many of these ministers and churches — which existed in various white branches and churches — ultimately left Mason’s organization, and some joined the Assemblies of God.<sup>55</sup> These departures occurred years after the 1914 General Council, however, and had nothing to do with the formation of the Assemblies of God.

Building upon Daniels’ identification of a “network of fellowships,” Church of God in Christ historian Elton Weaver contended that Mason would not have approved the use of the name Church of God in Christ by another group unless that group was in relationship with him. According to Weaver, “Bishop Mason said Church of God in Christ was the name God gave him and throughout Mason’s life he never gave that name away. Mason believed if he relinquished the name he would break the covenant he made with God.” However, Weaver acknowledged that it may be difficult to find evi-

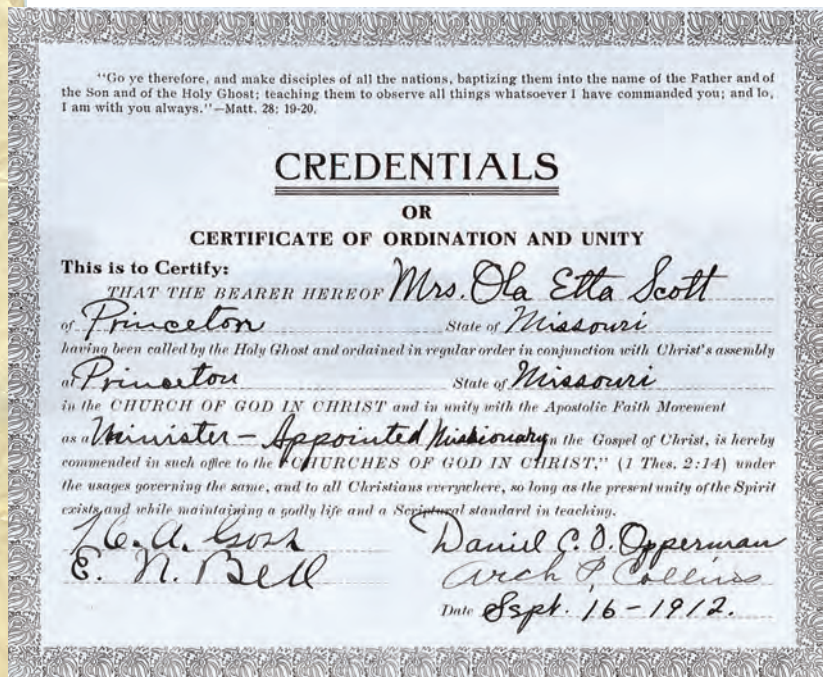
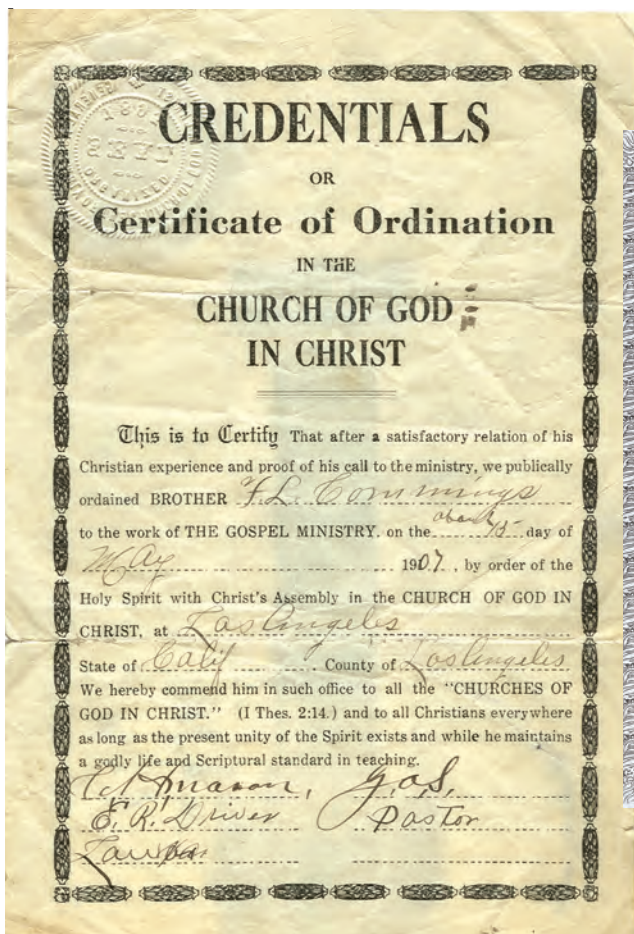
## First Black AG Missionaries

Isaac S. and Martha “Mattie” Neeley were the first African-Americans to serve as Assemblies of God missionaries. They originally were ordained by L. C. Hall with the [white] Church of God in Christ



Isaac (top center) and Martha Neeley (bottom right) with a group of missionaries at the 1923 General Council.

as missionaries on November 30, 1913. They served as missionaries to Liberia, then returned to the United States in 1919 and attended the 1919 General Council at Stone Church in Chicago. While they did not receive Assemblies of God credentials until 1920, this delay was probably because they were on the mission field. While on the field, they received support from Assemblies of God congregations, and *The Latter Rain Evangel*, published by Stone Church, printed many of their letters. The Neeleys received credentials as evangelists from the Illinois District in 1920, endorsed by Hardy Mitchell, the pastor of Stone Church. They served as evangelists and pastors in the United States until 1923, when they prepared to return to Liberia as missionaries. Isaac died on December 8, 1923, just before their departure. Mattie sailed back to Africa alone in 1924 and was in charge of Bethel Home in Cape Palmas, Liberia. She returned from the field in 1930.



Compare these sample ordination certificates from the two groups. One signed by C. H. Mason (on the left) and one signed by Howard Goss and others (on the right).

dence of links between the two groups, explaining that those who crossed the color line had to be very discreet.<sup>56</sup>

Weaver stated that to focus on a split in 1914 is to miss the significance of the relationship between Mason and the [white] Church of God in Christ. It would have been a miracle that the founders of the Church of God in Christ and the Assemblies of God crossed the color line in the first place.<sup>57</sup>

Weaver's analysis may help explain the relationship of Mason to the groups led by Adams and Holt. Indeed, significant evidence exists that Adams and Holt were organizationally connected to Mason. However, whether this theory will be widely accepted as explaining the possible relationship between Mason and the earlier group led by Goss, Bell, and others will depend on whether additional supporting evidence can be found.

One might ask why the founders of the Assemblies of God, in 1914, did not instead seek to join with Mason and make his interracial vision a reality.<sup>58</sup> Numerous factors, in addition to the unfortunate reality of Jim Crow laws and racism, separated those who

formed the Assemblies of God and Mason's Church of God in Christ. Ithiel Clemmons suggested that whites would have become "restive" if they could not "assume the prevailing leadership role."<sup>59</sup> There were real differences in culture, social backgrounds, missiology, organizational expectations, and — significantly — theology. Mason's group held to the Wesleyan belief in a separate crisis experience of sanctification, while the [white] Church of God in Christ was dominated by those following the Reformed "finished work" position, viewing sanctification as a lifelong process.

Very little, if any, evidence has been found that demonstrates an organic connection between Mason's organization and the [white] Church of God in Christ. The leaders of the [white] Church of God in Christ did have great respect for Bishop Mason, but this relationship seems to have been informal. Still, it is possible that additional information might exist that would shed light on the nature of the relationship between Mason and the founders of the Assemblies of God.

The task of finding such evidence is difficult because the Church of God in Christ does not have an archival repository, so significant materials documenting the denomination's history either have not been preserved or are located in private collections. Hopefully, future researchers will take up the challenge to better document the heritage of the Church of God in Christ — and to establish a Church of God in Christ archival collection. Then, perhaps, the question of Mason's relationship to the [white] Church of God in Christ can be answered to everyone's satisfaction.

#### Addressing Racial Disunity

While it may be accurate to state that founding members of the Assemblies of God did not leave Mason's organization in 1914, it would be incorrect to conclude that there were no racial implications to the first General Council. To the contrary — the formation of the largely-white Assemblies of God, in some ways, affirmed and institutionalized the divisions along racial lines that had long been apparent in most sectors of the movement,

mirroring the prevalent structures in society. Many Church of God in Christ brethren still express pain over what they perceive to have been a church split birthed by racism. Instead of dismissing this pain as not based in historical fact because an actual organizational split did not occur, Assemblies of God members would do well to reexamine their own history to discover the true roots of racial disunity.

The Assemblies of God has a mixed record on racial reconciliation. It is heir to an interracial ideal that dates back to the Azusa Street revival. However, Assemblies of God members have been subject to the same cultural confusion and prejudices that have afflicted those in the society around them.

For instance, there have been those in the Assemblies of God who held views that, today, would be deemed racist. W. F. Carothers, a Texas leader in Parham's Apostolic Faith Movement who later joined the Assemblies of God, for example, argued that God used racial hatred to correct the "unnatural, unheard of condition" of racial mixing.<sup>60</sup> In 1915, the *Weekly Evangel* published an article by Carothers in which he defended segregation. At the same time, Carothers paradoxically claimed that he and other Pentecostals in the South "have not the slightest prejudice or lack of divine love for the colored people."<sup>61</sup>

Later, the debate in the 1940s and 1950s on the "Colored Question" — whether to ordain African-Americans — generated conflict. In 1955, the General Presbytery records on the debate were expunged.<sup>62</sup> In some regions, the Assemblies of God gained a reputation for racial bigotry.

Cecil Robeck, recalled that, upon his arrival in 1970 as a student at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, a fellow student labeled him a racist because he belonged to

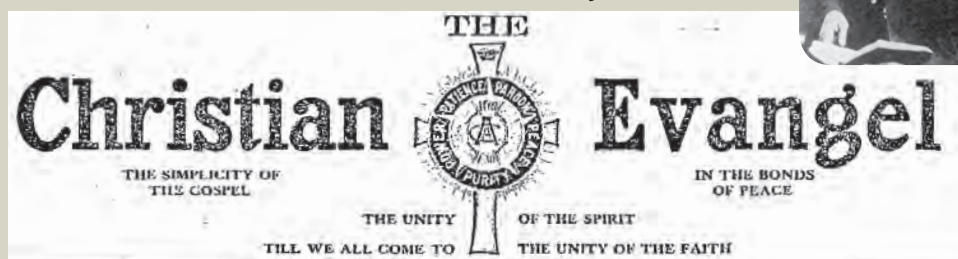
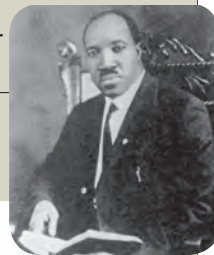
## Interracial Origins of *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*

**T**he official magazine of the Assemblies of God was ahead of its time long before it prefixed its title with "Today's" in 2002.

The first issue, published in Plainfield, Indiana on July 19, 1913 as the *Christian Evangel*, featured interracial content. Three articles were either by or about G. T. Haywood, the African-American pastor of the largest Pentecostal congregation in Indianapolis. Founding publishers J. Roswell and Alice Reynolds Flower, who became leaders in the newly-formed Assemblies of God less than one year

later, selected a masthead that remains relevant 95 years later: "The simplicity of the Gospel, In the bonds of peace, The unity of the Spirit, Till we all come to the unity of the faith." Their call to unity implicitly recognized that their readers did not yet have "unity of the faith" — that disagreement existed on some matters. In the meantime, they affirmed that believers should aim for "unity of the Spirit."

**The first issue of the *Christian Evangel* and G. T. Haywood.**



the Assemblies of God. The student, from Alabama, reported that in his experience the Assemblies of God was "narrow and bigoted," was completely white, had a terrible record on civil rights, and had some members who belonged to the Ku Klux Klan.

Robeck was stunned and responded that things must be quite different in the South than in the West, where he was reared. His experience underscored not only the regional differences that existed in the Assemblies of God regarding race, but also the late date during which these attitudes were felt.<sup>63</sup>

The 1989 General Council adopted a resolution opposing "the sin of racism in any form," calling for repentance from anyone who may have participated in racism "through personal thought or action, or through church and social structures" or through inaction, and resolving to work against racism and to seek reconciliation.<sup>64</sup> However, structures were not implemented to carry out this resolution, so it had little real effect.

A mile marker for racial reconciliation among Pentecostals — dubbed the "Memphis Miracle" — occurred

in October 1994 when representatives of the Assemblies of God, the Church of God in Christ, and other denominations gathered in Memphis for the final meeting of the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America.

At the previous year's meeting, representatives of white denominations apologized for the decades of prejudice that kept white and black Pentecostal churches apart. The Pentecostal Fellowship of North America, which from its inception in 1948 had only white member denominations, disbanded and a new racially inclusive organization, Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America, was formed.

The emotional 1994 meeting featured a series of scholarly papers addressing the history of racism in the Pentecostal movement and was followed by confessions of sin and an impromptu footwashing service. Donald Evans, an Assemblies of God pastor from Tampa, Florida, washed the feet of Bishop Ithiel Clemmons of the Church of God in Christ. This was followed by Bishop Charles Blake of the Church of God in Christ approaching

General Superintendent Thomas Trask and asking to wash his feet.<sup>65</sup>

Many leaders in the Assemblies of God, on the heels of the Memphis Miracle, experienced a heightened sense of urgency for racial reconciliation. The 1995 General Council resolved to encourage the “inclusion of black brothers and sisters throughout every aspect of the Assemblies of God.”<sup>66</sup>

In response, Trask appointed a committee to study the possibility of changing the General Presbytery and Executive Presbytery “so as to more accurately reflect the composition in language and culture of our Fellowship itself.”

In 1997, the General Council voted to include representatives from the ethnic fellowships in the General Presbytery and to expand the Executive Presbytery to include a representative from the ethnic fellowships.<sup>67</sup> Spencer Jones, African-American pastor of Southside Tabernacle in Chicago, served as the first ethnic Executive Presbyter. Zollie Smith followed Jones and served until his 2007 election as director of US Missions.

Today, the challenge for Pentecostals is to carry out this mandate for racial reconciliation. Real differences in cultures and histories often make it easiest for people to fellowship with those who have similar backgrounds.

One local church that is making strides to minister to all of God’s children is historic First Christian Assembly in Cincinnati, Ohio. The congregation, which celebrated its centennial in 2006, has a bold vision: “to be a racially reconciled and generationally rich, life-giving church, thriving in the heart of the city.” Its published history traces its colorful heritage, from its origins as an affiliate of Scottish-born faith healer John Alexander Dowie, to its ministry to European immigrants in the 1920s and 1930s, to the many missionaries it has sent out, to its present multi-ethnic make-up.<sup>68</sup>

The church’s pastor, Chris Beard,

felt called to be a reconciler, a vocation inspired by the passage of the 1995 race resolution, by Trask’s words that followed, and by the ministry of the late Church of God in Christ Bishop Gilbert E. Patterson.<sup>69</sup> This vision is not simply an adaption to contemporary multi-cultural values, it is an extension of the Great Commission and of the church’s own heritage of ministering to those in its diverse community.

First Christian Assembly in Cincinnati is not alone. The Assemblies of God has made great strides toward the full inclusion of all races and ethnicities in its ministries at all levels. Today, the Assemblies of God has twelve language districts. In addition, eighteen ethnic fellowships, which were without representation just ten years ago, now have one or more seats on the General Presbytery.

Since membership follows leadership, it is no accident that, in 2006, 35% of US Assemblies of God adherents were non-Anglo. Of the 2.8 million US adherents, nearly one million were ethnic minorities. In 2006, 500 Assemblies of God congregations had no single ethnic majority; they were multi-ethnic expressions of heaven on earth.<sup>70</sup>

Scott Temple, National Director of Intercultural Ministries for US Missions, believes these changes were God-ordained. Temple explained, “Clearly the Spirit has been speaking to our churches, and as the Spirit convicts the scripture directs. It is not political correctness but the ‘word of reconciliation’ that instructs our faith and inspires our practice.”

How should churches respond to complicity with racism in the past? According to Temple, “It is the ‘ministry of reconciliation’ that anoints us to come to terms with the past in the light of the present for the sake of the future. Despite dark moments in the past, the present is bright and the future brighter.” He noted that Assemblies of God pastors, ministries, and US missionaries are proactively finding ways to replicate the

best of the Azusa model from coast to coast. Temple predicted, “It’s just the beginning of something greater, for we shall see God’s glory together.”<sup>71</sup>

The interracial vision noted by Azusa Street participant Frank Bartleman — where “the ‘color line’ was washed away in the blood” — was never fully realized, whether at Azusa Street, in the Assemblies of God, or in the Church of God in Christ.<sup>72</sup> Zollie Smith’s recent election as the first African-American executive is evidence that the Assemblies of God is making progress toward the fulfillment of this vision. According to Smith, interracial unity is a witness of God’s redemption:

The race issue has and continues to be a long-standing barrier that Satan — the real enemy of humankind — has used to divide and distract us. Recounting our history of racial division challenges us to respond to the prayer of Jesus on behalf of His church, that we would become “ONE” so that the world would know that God sent Him to redeem it. We must continue to expose Satan and his racist schemes that divide us and to persuade our brothers to instead focus on the blood of Jesus that unites us.<sup>73</sup>

Will this interracial vision be fulfilled by the next generation within the Assemblies of God? Only history will tell. ✨



**Darrin J. Rodgers, M.A., J.D., is director of the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center and editor of *Heritage* magazine. He is author of *Northern Harvest* (a**

**history of Pentecostalism in North Dakota) and numerous articles in books and journals. His research interests include Pentecostal origins, ethnic aspects of Pentecostalism’s development, and the intersection of Christianity and culture. He may be contacted by email: [drodgers@ag.org](mailto:drodgers@ag.org)**

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Smith served as president of the National Black Fellowship of the Assemblies of God (1998-2007). He also served the New Jersey District Council as assistant superintendent (1998-2005) and then as executive secretary (2005-2007). The 2003 General Council expanded the number of executives on the Board of Administration to include the executive directors of US Missions and World Missions in addition to General Superintendent, Assistant General Superintendent, General Secretary, and General Treasurer. In 2007, the name of this executive body was changed from Board of Administration to Executive Leadership Team. Assemblies of God, Minutes of the 2007 General Council, Resolution 2.

<sup>2</sup> John Bueno, who has served as the executive director of World Missions since 1997, became the first non-Anglo to serve as an executive. Bueno wrote: "I am Hispanic because my father [Theodore] was of Spanish origin. My father was a full-blooded Spaniard, even though he was born in Colorado. His parents both were of Spanish descent and lived in Trinidad, which was an old Spanish enclave that for years did not intermarry with Anglos. However, my father did, and so I am a hybrid. I am Hispanic in the sense that I am of Spanish origin and that my father was a full-blooded Spaniard. I am half Anglo in that he married an Anglo woman, and so it has diluted a bit the Spanish blood. In general terms, I would say that I am the first non-Anglo executive to serve the US Assemblies of God. Another interesting note is that I am the first executive in the history of the Assemblies of God whose last name ends in 'o.' This may not be significant except that it includes a lot of other Latin ethnicities that generally are not considered in this grouping. I'm speaking of Italians, Portuguese, Spanish, and others. Many of the Italian people in our nation have lauded the fact that at last there was someone in the executive office whose last name ended in 'o.'" John Bueno, email to Darrin Rodgers, 25 January 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Lovett cited James M. Jones, *Prejudice and Racism* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1972). Leonard Lovett, "The Present: The Problem of Racism in the Contemporary Pentecostal Movement," paper delivered at the "Memphis Miracle," October 17-19, 1994, Memphis, TN, published in *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 14 (May 2005) <www.pctii.org>.

<sup>4</sup> Frank Bartleman, *Azusa Street: The Roots*

*of Modern-Day Pentecost*, ed. Vinson Synan (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1980 [reprint of *How Pentecostal Came to Los Angeles*, 1925]), 54.

<sup>5</sup> Alma White, *Demons and Tongues* (Bound Brook, NJ: The Pentecostal Union, 1910), 77-78.

<sup>6</sup> "Hot Springs Assembly; God's Glory Present," *Word and Witness* 10:4 (April 20, 1914): 1. One participant at the Hot Springs meeting recalled that Mason "brought a glorious message" and that "there were a number of colored folks present at this meeting." Walter J. Higgins, as told to Dalton E. Webber, *Pioneering in Pentecost: My Experiences of 46 Years in the Ministry* (Bostonia, CA: s.n., 1958), 42. Church of God in Christ historian Ithiel Clemmons wrote, "[Mason] preached on Thursday night, illustrating the wonders of God by holding up an unusually shaped sweet potato. He sang his spontaneous, improvisation of spiritual songs that Daniel Payne in 1879 called 'corn-field ditties.' With him were the 'Saints Industrial,' singers from Lexington, Mississippi. Mason bid the white leaders a warm farewell and gave them leave to void their Church of God in Christ credentials in order to switch to those of their new denomination." Ithiel C. Clemmons, *Bishop C. H. Mason and the Roots of the Church of God in Christ* (Bakersfield, CA: Pneuma Life Publishing, 1996), 71.

<sup>7</sup> Ellsworth S. Thomas, ministerial file, FPHC.

<sup>8</sup> Gary B. McGee, "Pioneers of Pentecost: Alice E. Luce and Henry C. Ball," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 5:2 (Summer 1985): 12-14.

<sup>9</sup> Other studies of the Assemblies of God and race include: Howard N. Kenyon, "An Analysis of Ethical Issues in the History of the Assemblies of God," Ph.D. Dissertation, Baylor University, 1988; Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "The Past: Historical Roots of Racial Unity and Division in American Pentecostalism," paper delivered at the "Memphis Miracle," October 17-19, 1994, Memphis, TN, published in *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 14 (May 2005) <www.pctii.org>; Howard N. Kenyon, "Black Ministers in the Assemblies of God," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 7:1 (Spring 1987): 10-13, 20; Wayne Warner, "A Call for Love, Tolerance, and Cooperation," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 14:3 (Fall 1994): 3-4, 31; Erik J. Hjalmeby, "A Rhetorical History of Race Relations in the Early Pentecostal Movement, 1906-1916," M.A. Thesis, Baylor University, 2007; Joe Newman, *Race and the Assemblies of God Church: The Journey from Azusa Street to the "Miracle of Memphis"* (Youngstown,

NY: Cambria Press, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Byron Klaus, ed., *We've Come This Far: Reflections on the Pentecostal Tradition and Racial Reconciliation* (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2007), back cover.

<sup>11</sup> David Daniels, "The Color of Charismatic Leadership," in *We've Come This Far*, 86.

<sup>12</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "The Leadership Legacy of William J. Seymour," in *We've Come This Far*, 51-55.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 62-65.

<sup>14</sup> Manuel Gaxiola, *La Serpiente y La Paloma: Historia, Teología y Análisis de la Iglesia Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús (1914-1994)* (1970, Mexico City, Mexico: Libros PYROS, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Revised and Corrected, 1994), 117; Daniel Ramirez, "Borderland Praxis: The Immigration Experience in Latino Pentecostal Churches," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67:3 (1999): 573-596; Gast n Espinosa, "'The Holy Ghost is Here on Earth': The Latino Contributions to the Azusa Street Revival," *Enrichment* 11:2 (Spring 2006): 122.

<sup>15</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "What Was William J. Seymour's Relationship to the Mexicans at Azusa Street?" forthcoming article.

<sup>16</sup> Lois E. Olena, "I'm Sorry, My Brother," in *We've Come This Far*, 130-152.

<sup>17</sup> Glenn Gohr, "For Such a Time as This: The Story of Evangelist Bob Harrison," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 24:3 (Fall 2004): 6.

<sup>18</sup> *Minutes of the General Presbytery*, 1939, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Olena, 130-132; Gohr, "For Such a Time as This: The Story of Evangelist Bob Harrison," 6.

<sup>20</sup> Olena, 142-147.

<sup>21</sup> Kenyon, 88.

<sup>22</sup> Olena, 142-147.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 147-148.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 150-151.

<sup>25</sup> Joe Newman, *Race and the Assemblies of God Church: The Journey from Azusa Street to the "Miracle of Memphis"* (Youngstown, NY: Cambria Press, 2007), 87. Newman's book is based on his 2005 dissertation at the University of Memphis.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Erik J. Hjalmeby, "A Rhetorical History of Race Relations in the Early Pentecostal Movement, 1906-1916," M.A. Thesis, Baylor University, 2007, 123. Hjalmeby's thesis may be downloaded from the following website: <https://beardocs.baylor.edu>

<sup>28</sup> Donald Weeks, "History of the Church of God in Christ," (Oakland, CA: unpublished paper, 1989), cited in Clemmons, 187.

<sup>29</sup> *Word and Witness* 9:12 (Dec 20, 1913): 1.

<sup>30</sup> Hjalmeby, 122-142.

<sup>31</sup> Newman, 8.

<sup>32</sup> Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 150, 169; Anthea Butler, "Walls of Division: Racism's Role in Pentecostal History," paper presented to the Society for Pentecostal Studies meeting at Wheaton College, November 10-12, 1994; and Robeck, "The Leadership Legacy of William J. Seymour," 61; among others.

<sup>33</sup> Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 28.

<sup>34</sup> Gary Don McElhany, "The South Aflame: A History of the Assemblies of God in the Gulf Region, 1901-1940," Ph.D. dissertation, Mississippi State University, 1996, 96.

<sup>35</sup> Wacker, 227.

<sup>36</sup> Glenn Gohr, "The Assemblies of God: A Good Name," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 14:3 (Fall 1994): 11-14, 30.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 30. Ordination certificates under the name Apostolic Faith Movement continued to be issued to members of this group as late as December 1910, and the earliest known certificates including the name Church of God in Christ date from March 25, 1911 (issued to Frank and Agnes Crouch).

<sup>38</sup> *Word and Witness* 8:10 (Dec 20, 1912): 1.

<sup>39</sup> McElhany, 115. While most historical accounts trace the origins of the whites' use of the name Church of God in Christ to Goss' group, Cordas C. Burnett claimed that the Church of God in Christ designation was first taken by Rodgers' group in 1911. He wrote that later there was a merger between Rodgers' organization and Goss's group. Burnett's sources are unknown. Cordas C. Burnett, "Forty Years Ago," *Pentecostal Evangel* 2081 (March 28, 1954): 12-13; Cordas C. Burnett, *Early History of ... the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1959), 7.

<sup>40</sup> Flower's correspondence and notes are on file at the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

<sup>41</sup> J. Roswell Flower, "History of the Assemblies of God," (duplicated paper prepared for instructional purposes at Central Bible Institute, Springfield, MO, [1950], 17.

<sup>42</sup> J. Roswell Flower, to Mack M. Pinson, 4 January 1950. Pinson file, FPHC.

<sup>43</sup> Carl Brumback, *Suddenly from Heaven: A History of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), 154; Klaude Kendrick, *The Promise Fulfilled: A*

*History of the Modern Pentecostal Movement* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), 80; Mario G. Hoover, "Origin and Structural Development of the Assemblies of God," M.A. Thesis, Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield, MO, 1968, 18; Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, 150-151; Edith Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism* [vol. 1] (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 132.

<sup>44</sup> The Pentecostal Historical Center (Hazelwood, MO), the archives of the United Pentecostal Church, holds Goss's diaries. The diaries consist of brief notations in a daily calendar detailing where Goss traveled and significant people with whom he met. The FPHC holds photocopies and notes from portions of those diaries. Robin Johnston of the Pentecostal Historical Center reviewed the diaries and did not find any mention of Mason. He noted that he visited several "colored" churches, but did not mention the names of the pastors. He also visited L. P. Adams, a white Memphis pastor affiliated with Mason, on three occasions from 1910 to 1912. Goss's diaries do not seem to corroborate Flower's account, which stated that Goss met with and was credentialed by Mason in late 1907. Goss's group did not begin issuing credentials under the name Church of God in Christ until late 1910 or 1911.

<sup>45</sup> Mack M. Pinson, to J. Roswell Flower, 10 January 1951. Pinson file, FPHC.

<sup>46</sup> Klaude Kendrick wrote that "no association existed between the two bodies" other than Mason's granting of permission to use the Church of God in Christ name. Kendrick, 80.

<sup>47</sup> Glenn Gohr, "Short-term Bible Schools: D. C. O. Opperman and Early Ministerial Training," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 10:4 (Winter 1990-1991): 10.

<sup>48</sup> Warner, "A Call for Love, Tolerance, and Cooperation," 31. A thorough study of the [white] Church of God in Christ remains to be done.

<sup>49</sup> Flower claimed Goss, Bell, and "a few other ministers" were credentialed by Mason. See Flower, "History of the Assemblies of God." However, Goss's credentials on file at the FPHC are with the [white] Church of God in Christ and do not include Mason's signature.

<sup>50</sup> Wayne E. Warner, "Church of God in Christ (white)," in *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 537.

<sup>51</sup> Gary B. McGee, *People of the Spirit: The*

*Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2004), 110-111.

<sup>52</sup> *Word and Witness* 9:12 (December 20, 1913): 4.

<sup>53</sup> David Daniels, "Charles Harrison Mason: The Interracial Impulse of Early Pentecostalism," in *Portraits of a Generation: Early Pentecostal Leaders* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 264.

<sup>54</sup> David Daniels, conversation with Darrin Rodgers, 9 January 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Daniels, "Charles Harrison Mason," 264-270.

<sup>56</sup> Elton Weaver, email to Darrin Rodgers, 8 January 2008.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* See also: Elton Hal Weaver, "'Mark the Perfect Man': The Rise of Bishop C. H. Mason and the Church of God in Christ," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Memphis, 2007.

<sup>58</sup> For a perceptive study concerning the missed opportunities for racial reconciliation caused by the organization of the Assemblies of God, see: Danielle M. Poulson, "Split or No Split, Is that the Question?: An Investigation into the Relationship between the Church of God in Christ and the Assemblies of God Prior to 1914," paper prepared for the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2007.

<sup>59</sup> Clemmons, 70-71.

<sup>60</sup> *Apostolic Faith* (Houston, TX) (March 1906): 12.

<sup>61</sup> W. F. Carothers, "Attitude of Pentecostal Whites to the Colored Brethren in the South," *Weekly Evangel* 103 (August 14, 1915): 2.

<sup>62</sup> Olena, 133-134. One year later, General Superintendent Ralph Riggs wrote: "You will recall that this matter [segregation vs. integration] was discussed at length at the Oklahoma City meeting. At that time we retreated entirely and expunged all of our actions from the minutes. We could not afford to go on record as favoring integration, neither did we want it to be known that we were in favor of segregation. That was an expedient dodging of the issue. But the matter, however, will not be this easily downed. It is clamoring for solution. Even the churches are going to be challenged concerning their attitude." Ralph M. Riggs, to E. L. Newby, 12 September 1956, Blacks/Race Relations file, FPHC.

<sup>63</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "The Past: Historical Roots of Racial Unity and Division in American Pentecostalism," *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 14 (May 2005) <www.pctii.org>

<sup>64</sup> Assemblies of God, *Minutes of the 1989 General Council*, 117-118.

<sup>65</sup> Vinson Synan, "Memphis 1994: Miracle  
*Continued on page 66*



Stan Berg (center, with mustache and holding child) with other chaplains and Jewish children in Belgium, 1944. The children, who had been in hiding during the Nazi occupation, were enjoying their first time in public.

## R. Stanley Berg Military Chaplain and Pastor of Glad Tidings Tabernacle, New York City

By Robert Berg

This was my father’s favorite picture from World War II. Not because he is sporting the mustache that distinguished his time in the European theater. But it portrays what the war was about. Stan Berg’s unit had landed on Utah Beach in Normandy some weeks after D-Day in 1944, and had fought its way through northern France. The picture shows him in the middle of a number of American army chaplains at a gathering for displaced Jewish children at Notre Dame church in Namur, Belgium.

The child in his arms represented tangibly the reason why he and his American comrades were risking their lives far from their own homes and families. They were there to defeat

Hitler’s plans for world domination. Here he joyfully holds the fruit of their labor: a young life rescued from the Nazi “final solution” of extermination of the Jews. Another of his favorite memories is the Chanukah service in 1944 that he and others arranged for Jewish soldiers in a synagogue that the Germans had left intact to store engines for their fighter planes.

Such moments were relatively rare. Being a chaplain in a combat setting in World War II meant dealing with death on a daily basis. He occasionally conducted mass burials and ran for cover when services were interrupted by shelling, but regularly counseled with soldiers who feared that they would not see the next day.

My dad was there because he felt it was where God wanted him. This

ing in 1937. He pastored churches in Virginia, North Carolina, and Maryland, and married another CBI graduate, Joybelle Sternall, in 1941. And though he was buried with military honors, and his gravestone will note his reception of the bronze star for carrying American and German wounded from battle fire, his identity was not ultimately the Army but the Church.

In 1948, after the death of Robert Brown, pastor of the influential Glad Tidings Tabernacle in New York City, his wife and copastor, Marie Brown, asked my father — her nephew — to come north to assist her. Sensing God’s direction once again, he brought his young family to the vastly different world of urban New York. Stan Berg devoted the next 45 years to that congregation, succeeded Marie Brown at

despite the fact that Assemblies of God constituents at the time were predominantly “conscientious objectors” opposed to participation in the war.

When he first heard the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, he heard a divine voice say, “You will be in it.” So when he embarked for Europe with his unit on the *Queen Elizabeth* in February 1944, he left his wife and his five-month-old son, Kenneth, responding to the call of country, but more so to the call of God.

I write this article just days following the burial of my father, R. Stanley Berg (July 8, 1916-October 27, 2007). In his youth, he sensed God’s call on his life and attended Central Bible Institute, graduat-



her death in 1971, and served as pastor until his retirement in 1992.

He served until retirement as the founding chairman and president of Teen Challenge in New York, helping David Wilkerson soon after he first came in 1958 to minister to youth involved in gang violence. "Brother Dave" is but one of many men and women in the New York area over the course of four and half decades who could testify to how Stanley Berg encouraged and helped them when they came to him with an idea about how to advance the kingdom of God. My dad also served the Assemblies of God as presbyter of the New York City Section from its creation in 1959, and as a general presbyter representing the New York District.

A few years ago, his nephew Jamie Bilton helped him to compile his memoirs. He chose the title, *Called, Chosen, Faithful*. These words will also be engraved on his gravestone, since they best reflect his lifelong commitment to the Lord's work. He spoke of being on "the front lines" whether as a chaplain in France or as a pastor in Manhattan. And I think he finished his "tour of duty" anticipating the words from his Lord, "Well done, good and faithful servant."



**Robert Berg is the youngest of the three children of Stanley and Joy Berg. He has a Ph.D in Biblical Studies and is presently the Director of LifeWorks: The**

**Center for Leadership & Life Calling at Evangel University and has taught in Evangel's Department of Theology since 1989.**

**Those interested in obtaining a copy of *Called, Chosen, Faithful* should contact Joy Berg at 1250 E. Rockhill, Springfield, MO 65804. \$12.00 postpaid to US addresses.**

## Elder Lucy Smith of Chicago

By Glenn W. Gohr

**E**lder Lucy Smith pioneered an independent Pentecostal work in Chicago which gained national recognition through her radio preaching, divine healing services, and her large-scale efforts to feed and clothe the needy in the Chicago area.

Born in Oglethorpe County, Georgia in 1870, Lucy Smith was reared in the Baptist faith. She married and moved to Athens, Georgia. Then in 1910, her husband deserted her. She and her 11 children left Athens and moved to Chicago, where she found work as a dressmaker to support her large family.

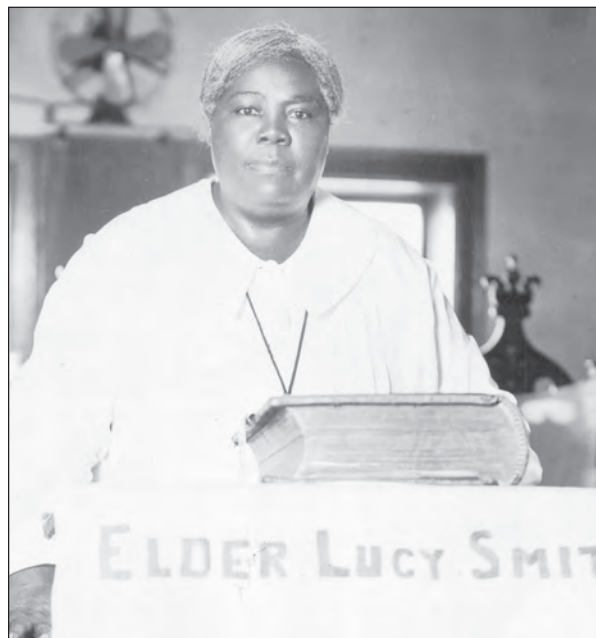
She soon became a member of the historic Olivet Baptist Church on Chicago's South side, and for a time attended the less prestigious Ebenezer Baptist Church. Neither church brought her satisfaction, so she made her way to the Stone Church [Assemblies of God], a predominantly white Pentecostal fellowship there. While attending this church, she received the baptism in the Holy Spirit in 1914.

She continued attending the Stone Church for two more years until she received a calling to divine healing ministry. She reports that the Lord showed her a vision of a huge tent and a multitude of people in need of healing.

In 1916, she launched a faith healing ministry in a room of her apartment. She started her ministry by giving advice to friends and neighbors. They soon began attending the prayer

meetings in her home, and news of God's healing power was spread by word of mouth.

After meeting for several years in her apartment, she established All Nations Pentecostal Church in the 1930s, located at 518 E. Oakwood Boulevard. The church was built with offerings from people who barely had enough to live on. It became a mis-



Elder Lucy Smith

sion church that earned a reputation for feeding and clothing the needy in the Chicago area.

Lucy is listed in *Black Women and Religion*<sup>1</sup> and was featured in the January 1950 edition of *Ebony* magazine.<sup>2</sup>

Through the years, the church was well attended. By 1950, the church boasted 3,000 members. Elder Lucy Smith gained national recognition as an evangelist and faith healer, and for the last 25 years of her life, she preached each Sunday over station WGES in Chicago, reaching an estimated 100,000 listeners with "The Glorious Church of the Air" radio program.

Elder Smith preached a positive message of faith and hope to counter the pain and suffering felt by many of the parishioners. Worship was upbeat

and uplifting. The services were typically emotional, sparked by shouting, rolling, and speaking in tongues. She emphasized salvation and healing. By 1950, it was claimed that 200,000 had been cured through her healing touch.

Lucy's daughter, Rev. Ardella Smith, succeeded her mother as pastor of the church in 1948, while Lucy became pastor emeritus. Lucy Smith passed away in her Chicago home on June 18, 1952, at the age of 82.

According to an obituary in the *Tri-State Defender* (Memphis, TN), 50,000 people came to pay tribute to Lucy Smith upon her passing.<sup>3</sup> Another report says about 100,000 people attended.<sup>4</sup> Rev. Frederick Fisher of Boston, Massachusetts delivered the eulogy, along with Rev. George Garner of Los Angeles. She most certainly left an indelible mark on the Pentecostal movement and on the world at large, through her long service as an evangelist, faith healer, radio preacher, and pastor of All Nations Pentecostal Church in Chicago.



**Glenn W. Gohr is reference archivist and copy editor for the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.**

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Marilyn Richardson, *Black Women and Religion: A Bibliography* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1980).

<sup>2</sup> "Faith Healer: Chicago's Lucy Smith Claims to Have Cured 200,000 by Spiritual Healing," *Ebony* (January 1950), 6.

<sup>3</sup> "50,000 Pay Last Tribute to Elder Lucy Smith in Chicago," *Tri-State Defender*, 5 July 1952.

<sup>4</sup> Wallace D. Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915-1952* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 182.

## Thomas Paino, Jr. Indianapolis Pastor and Missions Leader

By Troy D. Paino

**T**homas Paino, Jr., was born July 15, 1924 to Pentecostal parents who traveled throughout the Midwest preaching brush arbor meetings. In 1933 they settled down to pastor the struggling Woodworth-Etter Tabernacle (later renamed the West Side Gospel Tabernacle) in Indianapolis, Indiana. Paino, the third of nine children, felt called into the ministry at the age of six. Inheriting a stubborn determination from his Italian immigrant father and a strong sense of purpose

from his diminutive and charismatic mother, Paino never wavered from his vision of a life in service to the Lord. Despite not feeling called to be a missionary, as a young man Paino developed a heart for missions work. Unsure of how he would fulfill Jesus Christ's "great commission," Paino in 1941 went off to Central Bible Institute (CBI) in Springfield, Missouri with his older brother, Paul, to prepare for the ministry.

Barely seventeen when he left for Springfield, Paino graduated from CBI and married his sweetheart, Lois, in 1944 before turning twenty. He made plans to move to Goose Creek, Texas to serve as a youth pastor. However, just days before his wedding, the congregation contacted him and informed him that the church could no longer afford their services. The newlyweds instead

accepted the pastorate of a small storefront church in East Chicago, Indiana at a salary of \$20.00 a week.

For the next twelve years Tom and Lois ministered at churches in East Chicago; St. James, Minnesota; Covington, Indiana; and Evansville, Indiana before moving back to Indianapolis in 1956 to copastor the West Side Gospel Tabernacle with his parents. By this time the Painos had three children, Thomas III (1946), Susan (1948), and Tim (1952). Not long after arriving in Indianapolis, the couple had two more sons: Tracy (1960) and Troy (1962).



**Lois and Thomas Paino, Jr.**

After inviting his brother-in-law and sister, Harold and Edwina Duncan, to join them in Indianapolis, Paino identified a growing need in the city to minister to and care for the elderly. Paino envisioned building a conva-

lescent center that would serve both the physical and spiritual needs of an aging population. Toward this end, he found donors willing to take leaps of faith to construct a 187-bed facility, Lakeview Manor, that opened in 1968. A year later the West Side Gospel Tabernacle (renamed Lakeview Temple) relocated to a new building constructed on land adjacent to the nursing home.

Through a series of miraculous gifts from near strangers, fortuitous business alliances, and the financial acumen of its young administrator, Tom Tyson, Lakeview Manor by the mid-1970s became one of the most successful nursing homes in the greater Indianapolis area.

Remaining true to his commitment, Paino began to lead his church in annual fundraising campaigns for missions. By the late-1980s the church

raised approximately \$1 million annually for Assemblies of God missions. In addition, with the support of the board of directors, he began directing an increasing portion of Lakeview Manor's proceeds toward missions work. The journey began modestly in the 1970s with Lakeview Temple (later renamed Lakeview Christian Center) raising money to build a new church in Nassau, Bahamas.

Before long, however, Paino motivated his congregation to follow Christ's command to "go ye unto all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." From the mid-1970s until his retirement from fifty years of pastoring in 1994, Lakeview Christian Center had grown to over 2,000 attendees and had committed roughly \$14 million to eighty different missions projects around the world.

Never one to rest on his accomplishments, Paino at age seventy believed God had called him to devote the remainder of his life to spreading the good news of Jesus Christ to the world. He formed Action 2000 (renamed ActioNow in 1998), a non-profit organization devoted to raising private money for specific Assemblies of God missions projects. With the

help of a very successful businessman, Roy Prock, Paino began networking to gather names of individuals similarly committed to missions.

In 1995, however, his life took a sudden turn when his eldest son, Tommy, was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's Disease), a progressive neurodegenerative disease that attacks brain cells and the spinal cord. The very successful founding pastor of Northview Christian Life in Carmel, Indiana, Tommy ultimately died from ALS on January 5, 1999.

Faced with the horrific debilitation of his son, Paino devoted much of these years to the care of Tommy. However, even the pain of watching Tommy die never caused him to waver from his call. He continued to travel the world, listen to the needs of missionaries and nationals, and find new donors willing to support the cause. In fact, if anything, this experience caused a very driven man to work even harder toward the fulfillment of the great commission.

By the turn of the century, Paino committed all of his time and efforts toward raising money for high-impact tactical missions projects throughout the world with an emphasis on train-

ing nationals to spread the gospel. Since starting ActioNow, Paino has helped raise over \$12 million for Bible schools, seminaries, medical facilities and churches in over twenty countries. If the money Paino raised for missions as a pastor of Lakeview Christian Center is included, he has raised over \$25 million to support the spread of the gospel around the world.

At the age of 83, Thomas Paino, Jr. is still going strong, traveling around the world, identifying projects, and raising money for missions. As an octogenarian, he remains single-minded in purpose and boundless in energy. As he will tell anyone he meets, his call demands nothing less.



**Troy D. Paino, the son of Thomas Paino, Jr., graduated from Evangel University (1985) and earned his J.D. from Indiana University School of Law — Indianapolis**

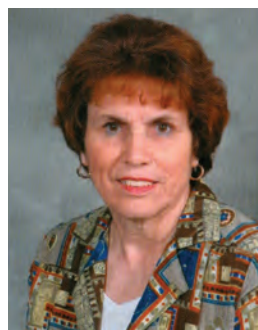
**(1988). He worked as a trial lawyer before returning to school to earn his M.A. (1993) and Ph.D. (1997) in American Studies from Michigan State University. Paino serves as dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Winona State University (Minnesota).**

## Glenda Morrow Central Bible College Music Professor

By Jane and Jim Harris

**G**lenda Winkle-Morrow, associate professor of music at Central Bible College (CBC), was given the special honor of professor emeritus this fall, having faithfully completed 43 years of teaching music at this institution. She has taught longer than any other teacher in the history of CBC.

She has been known to be a person devoted to high standards of detail and excellence in teaching, and she has inspired many music pastors and musicians who have studied at CBC, some of whom have gone on to post-graduate work. Many *Heritage* readers will be familiar with one of her students, Mark Thallander. Thallander served as the organist at the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California for 17 years,



**Glenda Morrow**

and he also has taught in Assemblies of God colleges.

The seed of Glenda's desire to teach college students was sown in her childhood. Her family was very hospitable to CBC students. Her mother would prepare home-cooked meals on Sundays and invite students into their home to share food and fellowship with their family.

After beginning piano studies at the age of 4, Glenda started as church pianist at age 7. She has been pianist, organist, and choir director in local churches and has played piano concerts in various states. In addition to

## HEROES OF THE FAITH

her piano performance abilities, Glenda writes and arranges music for children and piano and piano/organ duets. Prior to teaching at CBC she taught vocal and instrumental music in Missouri public schools.

Glenda received the Lynn Farrar Memorial Award as outstanding senior music major at Missouri State University where she received her B.S. in education. She also received a master's degree in music at Northwestern University. She holds the extremely high qualification of being a National Certified Teacher of Music with the Music Teachers National Association.

Glenda has attended many seminars, workshops, lectures, and meetings relating to piano pedagogy and music education, and she has taken postgraduate classes in Austria as well as many in the US. Her desire was always to keep up-to-date with the latest information in her field of teaching and to be a model of lifelong learning so that her students would have the privilege of

growing into becoming the best trained persons that they could be.

One student shared these comments: "I had Glenda for eight semesters of piano. This lady is a phenomenal musician—the undervalued jewel of the CBC music department. There's no questioning her talent or her ability. If it's printed, she can play it. If it's recorded, she can figure it out. If you are a music major and you don't get to know her, you're missing out."

For many years Glenda was a member of the Hymn Society of the United States and Canada (an interdenominational organization of church musicians and theologians). She presented a showcase (along with Paul Cope, former music professor and music department chair at CBC) of the Gospel Publishing House hymnal, *Sing His Praise*, at the national Hymn Society Conference in Washington, DC.

Glenda Morrow has been an example of Pentecostal scholarship across denominations and in secular contexts

throughout the world. In the history of our Fellowship, she is among the elite fraternity of Assemblies of God educators who have taught more than 40 years in one institution. In order to highlight the great contribution of this faithful servant to CBC, the keyboard lab in the Zimmerman Building on campus is going to be named in her honor. ✨



**Jane Harris is assistant professor of music at CBC, and her husband Jim Harris, Ph.D., is an ordained Assemblies of God minister. He works as a Christian counselor at Eaglecrest Counseling Center in Springfield, Missouri.**

*Readers who know of other AG educators who have served at one institution of higher education for at least 40 years are encouraged to contact the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.*

### FPHC News (continued from page 49)

Numerous individuals also donated historical materials, including home missionary Berneice (Mrs. Burl) Rogers; Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland historian Burton Janes; missionary and educator Barbara Cavaness; Bulgarian Pentecostal scholar Dony Donev; the family of missionary Margaret Carlow; Mildred (Mrs. C. T.) Beem; and others.

Frequent donor Patricia Pickard deposited, among other things, three unique and significant notebooks that contain well over 1,000 carefully-recorded pages of typescripts taken from shorthand notes during Kathryn Kuhlman's meetings in Pittsburgh (1949-1952), detailing Kuhlman's unvarnished thoughts on theology, social issues, politics, ethics, and spirituality. This major find, unexamined by the scholarly world,

promises to throw new light upon an era of Kuhlman's life that heretofore has been sparsely documented.

A numerically small but historically significant denomination, the International Pentecostal Church of Christ, deposited its archival collection at the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center. Its minutes and publications, including *The Bridegroom's Messenger*, are essential sources for understanding early Pentecostalism. Important collections representing other Pentecostal denominations — including Bund Freikirchlicher Pfingstgemeinden (the organization in Germany which works with the AG); Church of God (Cleveland, TN); Church of God in Christ; Church of God Jerusalem Acres; Church of God Mountain Assembly; Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith; and the Congregational Holiness Church — also were deposited in 2007. ✨

### Reconciliation (continued from page 61)

and Mandate," *Reconciliation* 1 (Summer 1998): 14-16, 18.

<sup>66</sup> Assemblies of God, *Minutes of the 1995 General Council*, 72-74.

<sup>67</sup> Assemblies of God, *Minutes of the 1997 General Council*, 23-28.

<sup>68</sup> *First Christian Assembly, Celebrating 100 Years: 1906-2006 History and Remembrance Book* (Cincinnati, OH: First Christian Assembly, 2006).

<sup>69</sup> Chris Beard, email to Darrin Rodgers, 3 January 2008.

<sup>70</sup> Scott Temple, email to Darrin Rodgers, 11 January 2008. Temple is National Director of Intercultural Ministries for US Missions, General Council liaison to 18 ethnic/language fellowship groups, and was a coauthor of the 1995 race resolution.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Bartleman, 54.

<sup>73</sup> Zollie Smith, email to Darrin Rodgers, 2 January 2008.

## Heritage in 6 Volumes (1981-2006)

### Heritage Volumes 1-6

6 Vol. Set (1981-2006) **750492** \$160.00

### Individual Volumes

Volume 6 (2004-2006)	<b>750491</b>	\$ 35.00
Volume 5 (2002-2003)	<b>750478</b>	\$ 35.00
Volume 4 (1998-2001)	<b>750444</b>	\$ 35.00
Volume 3 (1995-1997)	<b>750156</b>	\$ 35.00
Volume 2 (1990-1994)	<b>750427</b>	\$ 35.00
Volume 1 (1981-1989)	<b>750426</b>	\$ 35.00



Volumes 5-6 (not pictured above) are spiral bound.

**iFPHC.org**  
**HERITAGE MAGAZINE**

**In Assemblies of God Heritage you can read about the pioneers, churches and innovative ministries that helped form who we are today. Its colorful pages, which capture the lively stories of our Pentecostal past, will inspire and evoke memories. We have been publishing Heritage since 1981. It's never too late to catch up on the past! Back issues are available individually, in bound volumes, on CD-ROM, and by downloading them from the FPHC website.**

### Assemblies of God Heritage (1981-2006) CD-ROM

This CD collection of *Heritage* allows users to perform full-text searches while retaining the original layout. This product requires Adobe Acrobat Reader.

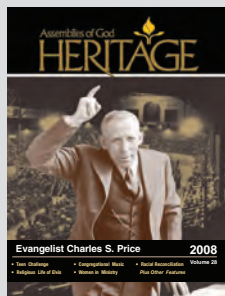
AGH (1981-2006) CD-ROM **750480** \$ 20.00



### Heritage Annual Edition

Order extra copies of the 2008 edition for family and friends. Features inspiring stories of Charles S. Price, Teen Challenge, Elvis, and others. On orders of five or more, \$5 each.

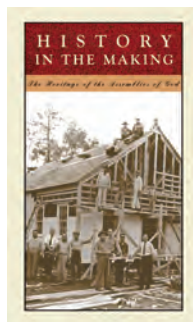
Heritage Annual 2008 **750280** \$ 8.00



### HISTORY IN THE MAKING VIDEO

Here is just what you need to introduce the Assemblies of God to your Sunday School classes, youth groups, and others interested in learning more about our church. Not only does this video capture the exciting ways in which the Holy Spirit moved in our history, it also shows how God is moving in the church today and gives a glimpse of our bright hope for the future.

History Video VHS **750195** \$19.95



## Help us Share the Story of the Assemblies of God by donating 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
- Diaries
- Books
- Newsletters
- Tracts
- Sermons
- Interviews
- Audiovisual Resources
- Correspondence
- Congregational Histories
- Photographs
- Scrapbooks
- Memorabilia
- College Yearbooks
- Other Materials



Your contribution might be just what we need to fill gaps in one of our many collections.

## Visit our Heritage magazine website

[www.iFPHC.org/Heritage](http://www.iFPHC.org/Heritage)

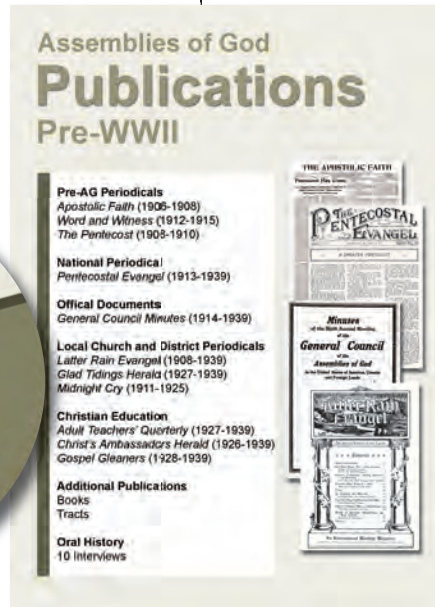
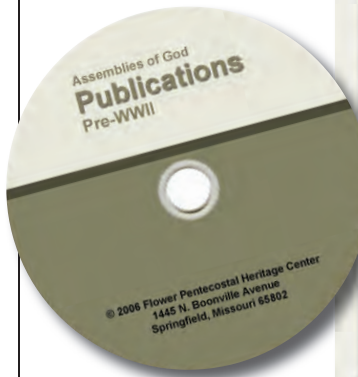
- › Use our search engine to find articles
- › Download articles for free
- › Order back issues
- › Order *Heritage* Products

# iFPHC.org DIGITAL PRODUCTS

**Save space on your bookshelf. Save time by doing text searches.** Save money by not having to buy originals. FPHC's products are designed for your convenience. As all of our digital products use the widely-used file format of Adobe Acrobat PDF, you can focus on learning history and not on a new program. Each of our products contains 1000s of pages of research material on text-searchable CD-ROMs and DVD+Rs.

You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader 6.0 or higher to use FPHC digital products.

FPHC digital products are Windows and Mac compatible.



### DISCLAIMER

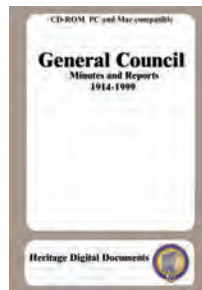
Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center digital products are copies of materials held in its archives. The FPHC collection, as well as these products, may contain missing or damaged pages and poor quality typeface. Every reasonable attempt was made to complete these collections and to use the best available copies in the creation of these products.



## Pentecostal Evangel

The *Pentecostal Evangel* has always played an important role in the Assemblies of God. Through its many articles it offers teaching on doctrinal issues, inspiring testimonies, and aids in documenting church growth and missionary efforts. Whatever the research topic, the *Pentecostal Evangel* is one of the best places to look for theological issues and ministry trends in the Assemblies of God.

PE (1913-1969) 1 DVD+R	<b>750486</b>	\$ 99.95
PE (1913-1949) 10 CD-ROMs	<b>750418</b>	\$ 139.00



## General Council Minutes and Reports

The *General Council Minutes and Reports* are a valuable resource for those interested in learning how the Assemblies of God handled debates on core doctrinal issues, challenges in world missions, the establishment of national ministries, and scores of other ministry and congregational concerns. All of this and more is documented in the minutes and reports from the General Council.

GCMR (1914-1999) CD-ROM	<b>750439</b>	\$ 20.00
-------------------------	---------------	----------

### Additional Publications on CD-ROM

<i>Latter Rain Evangel</i> (1908-1939)	2 CD-ROMs	<b>750417</b>	\$ 30.00
<i>Word and Witness</i> (1912-1915) and <i>The Pentecost</i> (1908-1910)	CD-ROM	<b>750419</b>	\$ 15.00
<i>La Luz Apostólica</i> (1965-1973) y <i>El Evangelio Pentecostal</i> (1972-1992)	CD-ROM	<b>750446</b>	\$ 15.00

### Recommended

## Our most comprehensive AG collection with over 40,000 pages

### Assemblies of God Publications: Pre-WWII

Move beyond the traditional starting places for research. With this DVD+R you gain access to over 40,000 pages of books, tracts, national and local periodicals, and adult and youth Christian education materials. Featured core resources include the *Pentecostal Evangel* (1913-1939) and *General Council Minutes and Reports* (1914-1939), as well as *The Apostolic Faith* (Azusa Street newspaper) and other periodicals that predate the Assemblies of God. As a bonus this product includes 10 MP3 audio interviews of those who were either active in ministry or eyewitnesses to major events and personalities in the early years. If you are looking for a broad-based collection of primary source materials for understanding the formational years of the Assemblies of God, look no further.

AGP1 (1906-1939) DVD+R	<b>750487</b>	\$ 39.95
------------------------	---------------	----------

## Healing Evangelists 1881-1957

John Alexander Dowie  
Aimee Semple McPherson  
Carrie Judd Montgomery  
Charles S. Price  
Maria Woodworth-Etter

Leaves of Healing (1894-1906)  
Bridal Call (1918-1929)  
Triumphs of Faith (1881-1949)  
Golden Grain (1926-1957)  
Various Books



**50,000+ page collection of periodicals  
and books on one DVD+R**

**Recommended**

### Healing Evangelists

This DVD contains the periodicals and books of five well-known healing evangelists that made a significant impact on the early Pentecostal movement. They include John Alexander Dowie (1847-1907), Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944), Carrie Judd Montgomery (1858-1946), Charles S. Price (1887-1947), and Maria Woodworth-Etter (1844-1924). With a total count of over 50,000 pages, this DVD offers a wealth of resource material for those interested in healing ministries and the early Pentecostal movement.



Healing (1881-1957) DVD+R    **750488**    \$ 49.95

### Also Available Separately on CD-ROM

#### Leaves of Healing

LH (1894-1906) 6 CD-ROMs    **750441**    \$100.00

#### Golden Grain

GG (1926-1957) 2 CD-ROMs    **750436**    \$ 30.00

#### Triumphs of Faith

TF (1881-1946) 2 CD-ROMs    **750433**    \$ 30.00

*Notice: These three periodicals are available for a much lower cost as part of the Healing Evangelists DVD featured above.*

### Early Periodicals

#### Confidence

*Confidence* was an early British Pentecostal periodical edited by A. A. Boddy, an Anglican rector who was baptized in the Spirit in 1907. Sermons and reports given at the conferences and revivals held at Boddy's parish were recorded in the pages of *Confidence*.

C (1908-1926) CD-ROM    **750420**    \$ 20.00

#### Word and Work

Samuel G. Otis published *Word and Work* to promote Pentecostal meetings and churches in the New England area, including meetings with Maria Woodworth-Etter, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Smith Wigglesworth. The issues are filled with sermons, articles, and news items pertaining to the early Pentecostal movement.

WW (1899-1940) CD-ROM    **750434**    \$ 20.00

### Academic Resource

#### Society for Pentecostal Studies Papers

These papers were presented at the annual meetings of the Society for Pentecostal Studies from 1982-2004. They consist of cutting edge scholarship on Pentecostalism in areas such as Biblical Studies, History, Missions & Intercultural Studies, Philosophy, Practical Theology/Christian Formation, Religion & Culture, and Theology.

SPS (1982-2004) CD-ROM    **750490**    \$ 99.95

## Theology and Local Church Ministry HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS



**PARACLETE**

**1**

**1** *Paraclete* (1967-1995) is a journal concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit that was published by the Assemblies of God. Its pages contain dialogue and discussion of some of the hottest theological issues of the times.

CD-ROM    **750435**    \$ 20.00



**ADVANCE**

**2**

**2** *Advance* magazine (1965-95) played an important role in the ongoing education of church leaders. It featured articles on the work of the Holy Spirit, sermon ideas, and how-to articles related to local church ministry.

2 CD-ROMs    **750465**    \$ 40.00



**PULPIT**

**3**

**3** *Pulpit* (1958-65), the predecessor of *Advance*, was the first Assemblies of God periodical created specifically to address practical theology and leadership issues faced by pastors.

CD-ROM    **750464**    \$ 15.00

#### Advance and Pulpit Set

3 CD-ROMs    **750466**    \$ 45.00

**The Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center's oral history program**

is designed to capture the stories of the people whose lives were intertwined with the Assemblies of God. The program was started over 25 years ago, and FPHC now has a collection of over 600 interviews ranging from 30 minutes to 8 hours. Interviews are available on cassette tape, RealAudio file, audio CD, videotape, or as part of an MP3-CD collection.

**Visit our oral history website**

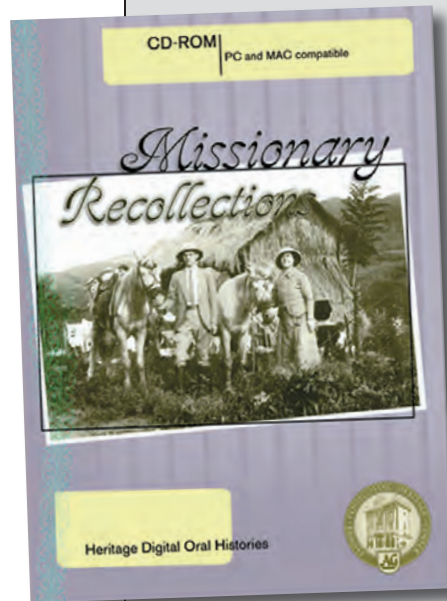
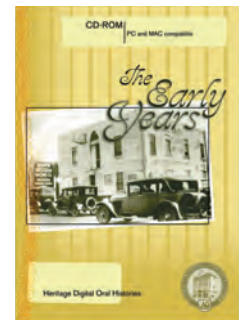
[www.ifphc.org/oralhistory](http://www.ifphc.org/oralhistory)

- › Listen to free podcasts of interviews
- › Use Archive Advanced Search to find interviews
- › Order individual interviews
- › Order interview collections on MP3-CDs

**Early Years**

The interviews in this collection focus on the early years of the Assemblies of God and the Pentecostal movement. Various pastors, evangelists, and leaders reflect on memories of the Azusa Street revival, the founding convention of the Assemblies of God in 1914, and evangelizing in the early years of our history. Alice Reynolds Flower, Joseph Wannemacher, C. M. Ward, and Ernest Williams are among the many personalities that can be found on this MP3-CD.

EY MP3-CD **750430** \$ 20.00



**Missionary Recollections**

This collection of missionary oral history interviews is a sample of 16 hours of interviews drawn from the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center's rich collection. You can learn more about the background history and be able to understand firsthand some of the hardships, dangers, joys and sorrows of several of our key missionaries on foreign fields from places like Africa, India, China and Latin America.

**Missionary interviews on this MP3-CD:**

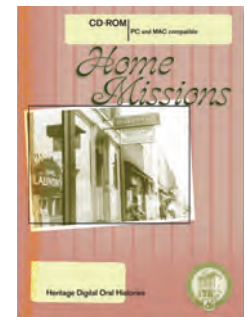
Hugh and Betty Baker, H. C. Ball, Ada Bolton Bard, Eva Bloom, Murray N. Brown, Sr., John H. Burgess, Alfred and Elizabeth Cawston, Charles Greenaway, Melvin L. Hodges, J. Philip Hogan, Maynard L. Ketcham, Howard C. Osgood, Everett L. Phillips, Harriet Williams Schoonmaker, Anna Stafsholt, Esther Harvey,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

MR MP3-CD **750431** \$ 20.00

**Home Missions**

Here is a 28-hour oral history collection focusing on Assemblies of God home missions in interviews with 14 men and women whose ministry turf included prisons, the Kentucky Mountains, Alaska, Native American reservations, Teen Challenge centers, and other needy areas. You'll hear the actual voices of Ann Ahlf, David Hogan, Andrew Maracle, Paul Markstrom, Lula Morton, Frank Reynolds, Curtis Ringness, and seven others.

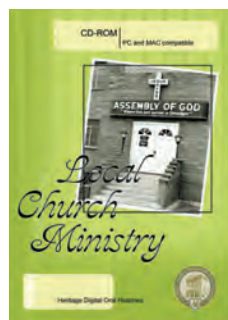
HM MP3-CD **750437** \$ 20.00



**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





**iFPHC.org**  
**REVIVALTIME**

Who can forget C. M. Ward, Dan Betzer, and the *Revivaltime* choir? For forty years, their voices were

heard around the world on *Revivaltime* – the Assemblies of God radio program. Through our *Revivaltime* products, you can listen to C. M. Ward's warmth and wit once again as he tackled the difficult

questions of life, and hear the *Revivaltime* choir performing your favorite songs.



C. M. Ward

*Revivaltime*  
FAVORITES



1950-1990

**Revivaltime Favorites**

21 songs selected from radio broadcasts and *Revivaltime* choir albums from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

RTF CD **750473** \$ 14.95

**Songs on this CD:**

Blessed Assurance	Let Us Praise the Almighty	Arise, My Soul, Arise
Written in Red	In the Name of the Lord	I've Just Seen Jesus
Symphony of Praise	Name Above All Names	Moving Up to Gloryland
You are My Hiding Place	In One Accord	The Holy City
Look for Me Around the Throne	Yes, He Did	The Lord's Prayer
My Life is in You, Lord	Rise and Be Healed	Yes, It is Mine
He Came to Me	He is Jehovah	I Will Bless the Lord

**Clearance Sale — While Supplies Last**



**Revivaltime Classics**

Collection of 14 classic sermons by C. M. Ward with introductions and interviews by Dan Betzer, his successor.

Revivaltime Classics  
7 CD Set **750463** \$59.95

Revivaltime Classics  
7 Tape Set **750455** \$39.95

Revivaltime Classics  
1 MP3-CD **750470** \$29.95



**Revivaltime**

**Reenactment 2005**

Songs and a sermon from the 2005 Denver, Colorado General Council.

Revivaltime Reenactment  
CD **750484** ~~\$14.95~~ \$6.95

Revivaltime Reenactment  
Tape **750485** ~~\$9.95~~ \$4.95

Revivaltime Reenactment  
DVD **750482** ~~\$24.95~~ \$11.95

Revivaltime Reenactment  
VHS **750483** ~~\$19.95~~ \$9.95



**Revivaltime**

**Reenactment 2003**

Held in conjunction with the 2003 Washington, D.C. General Council.

Revivaltime Reenactment  
Tape **750469** ~~\$9.95~~ \$4.95

Revivaltime Reenactment  
DVD **750472** ~~\$24.95~~ \$11.95

Revivaltime Reenactment  
VHS **750471** ~~\$19.95~~ \$9.95

# Make a Difference!

## Help the FPHC to share the story of the

**D**o 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
- Diaries
- Books
- Newsletters
- Tracts
- Sermons
- Interviews
- Audiovisual Resources
- Correspondence
- Congregational Histories
- Photographs
- Scrapbooks
- Memorabilia
- College Yearbooks

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 US, 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).

# Assemblies of God



## 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 the Assemblies of God Foundation ([www.agfoundation.com](http://www.agfoundation.com)) for additional information by phone at (800) 253-5544.

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 J. Rodgers, M.A., J.D.**

email: [drodgers@ag.org](mailto:drodgers@ag.org)

**Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center**  
1445 N. Boonville Ave.  
Springfield, MO 65802 USA

phone: (417) 862-2781 • (877) 840-5200 (toll free)  
web: [www.iFPHC.org](http://www.iFPHC.org)

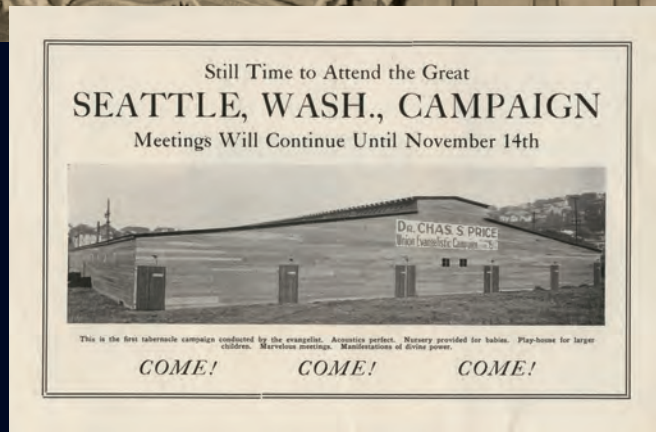
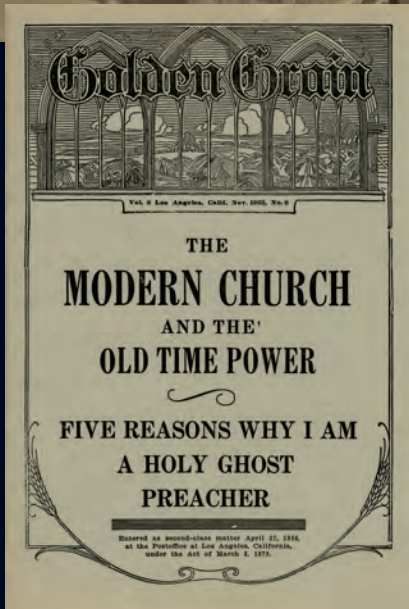
## 3 Supporting the Wayne Warner Research Fellowship

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.





Above: Advertisement for a Price campaign in Seattle, Washington, 1926.

Left: A sample cover of Charles Price's *Golden Grain* magazine.



Charles S. Price campaign at Massey Hall, Toronto, Ontario, held September-October 1932.