

The Early
Pentecostal Revival

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History of
Twentieth-Century Pentecostals
and
The Pentecostal Assemblies of the World,
1901-30

by James L. Tyson

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*To my life's partner, most
trusted friend, and confidante,
who has stood with me through every
storm, my wife, Linda Sue Tyson, and to
my three children, Erica, Troy, and
Marlon. I am truly the most
blessed man in the world.*

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Foreword

What a thrill it was for me to read this book, which contains such rich history of the work of our great Savior, Jesus Christ, in the latter days! As I began to read the pages of the manuscript, the book seemingly came alive. I could feel the moving of the Spirit of God as I studied the text and viewed the pictures. My heart was moved as Elder Tyson documented so ably the falling of the latter rain. I can see that much prayer and diligent research has gone into the writing of this book.

Elder Tyson comes from a distinguished family. His heritage has been laid before him by his mother, the late Evelyn Haynesworth Tyson, and his father, Bishop James E. Tyson. His is a life steeped in Apostolic doctrine, which is reflected throughout his writing. This book is the manifestation of a young man who is not only Holy Ghost filled but who truly believes in what he has been taught, not only by his parents, but also by many other great Apostolic preachers. Because he dared to follow his dream, he has written this great documentary.

I sincerely hope that everyone who reads this book will drink deeply from its contents and be strengthened thereby. We must remember, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

To my beloved nephew from Aunt Jean, with godly Christian love always!

Elma Jean Bowers

Preface

The Pentecostal Assemblies of the World evokes a myriad of emotions and opinions. To some it is not committed to bold change and is essentially backwards while many feel it is the bastion of progressive ideals. There are those who chide it as being spiritually weak and liberal without regard for biblical standards and pragmatic holiness, but to others it remains one of the last strongholds and perpetrators of sanctification. To some it is ultra-conservative, shackled by the banal chains of tradition and living by codes and credos that are in no way Bible based. Others profess it is disorganized, with a lack of unity and continuity hovering over its good intentions. For many it has grudgingly succumbed to the spirit of the age and now wears the tight-fitting cloak of materialism, leaving great gain through godliness and contentment to the disciples of an earlier Christianity.

It is the oldest continuously existing “Oneness” or monotheistic Pentecostal organization in the world, yet those of our “children” who have left “home” to build works and organizations of their own exercise respectful restraint while pondering our lack of progress. Even something as seemingly innocent as our name, the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, has evoked argument. For years a camp propagated the idea that the very name involuntarily suggests alliance with the world.

The Pentecostal Assemblies of the World is, as the Greeks described, an enigma. Through the decades, though, it has come to represent the embodiment of all Pentecostal groups—mother in many dimensions. It is an

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organization of ministers, primarily pastors. Many adherents have severed their ties with the organization, but most have remained.

It is not quite safe to be editorial within our ranks for fear of rousing the ire of the loyal discontented or the discontented loyal. But to look introspectively at ourselves is ultimately good. To put an imagined stethoscope to the heartbeat of our past and present can do nothing but lead us to an honest appraisal and prognosis of our future.

This documentary does not offer a prescription for self-healing. We leave that to those who are qualified through time and experience to suggest whatever measures are required. This, though, is a study of what we were, what we are, and if God should tarry, what we could and should be before His imminent coming. It is but a small gesture in a great, long-running story. It is meant to be a testimony of many great men and women of the faith who, initially with only a desire for fellowship, established a great church that Christ might be exalted.

These men and women were pioneers of a visionary sort. Much of the history of this organization is filled with fascinating drama, for it contains much heartbreak and many hardships. It is the story of religious, racial, social, and philosophical prejudices and bigotry, which affected the Pentecostal movement. The story speaks of storefront cathedrals, mule-drawn wagons for transportation to and from these cathedrals, pot-bellied stoves, wood benches, and planked floors that dominated the decor of those early days. It speaks of organizational splits and divisiveness in a group of people expostulating a unique doctrine of the Godhead in a world dominated by trinitarianism. It is a history of many who were poor and uneducated but

prayerful, faithful, and hard working and who persisted so that there might be a history to write. It represents the faceless, nameless missionaries of the early 1900s in China, Europe, and Africa who have no popular legacy but who nonetheless served the PAW with dignity. It is about pastors and their wives who labored in nondescript towns for dreary, long years and knew the end results of their labors would mostly go unrecognized and unheralded. But they served anyhow.

Ours is a great history. Those early pioneers' faith in our ability to manage their dreams demands that it be great. This history is steeped in poignant determination and that ever-decreasing commodity known as courage. There are few today willing to accept the challenge of rising above the status quo to further the name of Jesus. It is a history borne on the back of another history—another story broader in scope and dimension that encompassed many different people and genres—the story of Pentecost itself.

In the end, no apologies are offered for addressing the problems that have plagued us throughout this century, for we have dedicated ourselves to be as objective as possible. Our future generation of young men and women cannot enhance the goal of progress in the future without being given the leverage of examining the mistakes of the past. If there is to be a history, let it be honest and forthright in its presentation. This has been and is our objective.

A popular songster of our time, Lee Greenwood, captured the hearts of the American people with his rousing musical salute to our beautiful country. He entitled his composition "I'm Proud to Be an American." It eloquent-

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ly speaks of the factors that make our country the greatest on the earth. One of the things I hope this study will do is to serve as my personal vehicle to express my heartfelt sympathies—that I am glad to belong to the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World.

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my thanks to the following people: First, may the Lord somehow receive all of the praise from this work. I thank Him for giving me the mind, the will, and the strength to finish “this course.”

To my mother, the late Evelyn Haynesworth Tyson, who taught me many valuable lessons on life. When I was thirteen years old, I got so frustrated with an art project I was to enter in a contest that I threw down my brushes and vowed not to finish my picture. She made me finish the painting just to instill in me the merit of completing something one starts. I won the contest, but more importantly, I have tried never to forget that principle—that doing anything worthwhile takes stamina, patience, and stick-to-itiveness—and I needed all these for this project. Thanks, Mom. . . . I love you.

To my father, Bishop James E. Tyson, for teaching me and my siblings the importance of hard work, courage, and paying attention to details. We thank you, Dad, for all of the sacrifices you have made for us. We love you.

To my sisters and brothers—Shawn, Lisa, Craig, and Kathy—for insisting on maintaining our close ties though we be separated by time and distance, and for the many adventures we had as P.K.'s (preacher's kids).

To my mother- and father-in-law, Sister Edith and Brother Harold Wallace, for being a real mom and dad to me since I married your little girl.

To my brother- and sister-in-law, Bishop Norman and Rita Wagner, who helped and stood by my wife and me from the beginning and have never ceased to love us. To

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To the Assemblies of God Archives for permission to use the articles by John Ripley, Lillian Thistlethwaite, Agnes Ozman, and Arthur Osterburg and the articles from the *AG Heritage*.

To all of the patriarchs of Pentecost, deceased and alive, who represent the royal priesthood of God.



Parham's Bethel Healing Home in Topeka, Kansas, 1898

Charles Parham: Trailblazer for God

January 1, 1901, will forever exist as one of the tide-water marks in the continuing narrative of Pentecost. Many men and women who engaged in the prophetic prospects of revival had for years predicted that the future held a repeat baptism as on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). It would be the culmination of all the dreams, hopes and aspirations of God's people. Those who had pressed for spiritual reformation since the apostles would be rewarded for their undiminished vision.

It is amazing to witness the unfolding of God's mind and purpose in men and women the world would deem either unfit or unqualified. There are lessons to be learned from not taking a man too lightly, especially when that man is under God's anointing and unction. It would be wise to remember the indomitable acts rendered by the ignominious likes of Elijah, Jeremiah, Joseph, and Gideon. God can and will use whomever He so pleases to forward His plan and purpose.

The Early Pentecostal Revival

All twentieth-century Pentecostals owe an eternal debt to Charles Fox Parham, for it is through him that history credits the genesis of the modern Pentecostal movement as it is known today. The chronicling of Pentecost cannot be so narrow as to suppose that the focus of twentieth-century revival can be attributed to one man or personality. From 1900 to 1910 there arose many spontaneous charismatic outpourings throughout the world. But history cannot overlook the role Parham played in the movement.

Known to many as the father of the modern Pentecostal movement, he was born in Muscatine, Iowa, on June 4, 1873. He felt a call to the ministry at the age of nine. Having begun his religious affiliation with the Congregational Church, five years later he joined the Methodist Church. At sixteen, he enrolled at Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas, to prepare for the ministry.

It was a time of constant anguish for Parham. Not only was he struggling with his inception into manhood, but many times he doubted his call to preach the Word of God. He seriously considered changing his preparation from the ministry to medicine. During this time of confusion and inner doubt, he contracted rheumatic fever and almost died. He felt this was a direct result of his disobeying God and not following God's desire for him to preach the gospel. He prayed and asked God for healing and deliverance and indeed was restored to good health.

At the age of nineteen, he finished college and set out to do God's bidding. He began his ministering in the Methodist Church in Linwood, Kansas. Vinson Synan, in his book *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* states, "Parham seems to have had diffi-