



The Stone Church in Chicago where the 1910 Pentecostal Convention was held.

Pentecostal Missions and the Changing Character of Global Christianity

By Heather D. Curtis

The rapid expansion of Christianity across the world in the past 100 years has been fueled in part by the emergence of Pentecostalism and its preference for planting indigenous churches. Mainline denominations generally had adopted a Western colonial model — establishing mission stations as beachheads in foreign lands, led by Western missionaries who placed native workers on their payroll. They sought to achieve Christianization through Westernization, establishing schools and hospitals and seeking to transform the culture through education and modernization. Many early Pentecostals, however, adopted a radical missions strategy — insisting that what was needed was not Westernization, but a personal transformative encounter with God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

These conflicting missions strategies were on display in 1910 at two missionary conferences — the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, which attracted the prominent mainline missiologists of the day; and the semiannual Pentecostal Convention at the Stone Church, a much smaller gathering of missionaries and church leaders in Chicago.

As American delegates to the World Missionary Conference were preparing to sail for Edinburgh in the spring of 1910, another gathering devoted to the “subject of world-wide missions” was taking place in Chicago, at the Stone Church. From May 15-29, a group of “God’s dear children”¹ assembled daily in Chicago for meetings that pressed “the claims of the world field upon young and old for prayer, for giving, and for giving.”²

This semiannual Pentecostal Convention at the Stone Church was, by compari-

son with the World Missionary Conference about to open at Edinburgh, a humble affair. Participants numbered in at most the hundreds rather than the thousands. Publicity for the event consisted of a few notices posted in the *Latter Rain Evangel*, a periodical produced at the Stone Church, and a “large sign bearing the striking head-line, ‘A Glorious Convention’” hung on the outside of the building.³ Planning was minimal: “the only definite date we have fixed upon is the opening day,” the organizers declared; the duration of the convocation would depend on the “Lord’s leading.”⁴

This reliance on the Holy Spirit was, according to many attendees, the distinguishing feature of the Pentecostal Convention. Convinced that “God was working all through the Convention to bring things to pass for foreign fields,”⁵ participants were confident that the gathering would “mean much for His work all over the world.” “The ends of the earth and the courts of heaven are going to hear from this blessed Convention,” one chronicler proclaimed. “India is going to feel it; China is going to feel it; schools, homes, and other lives touched by these deepened ones are going to feel it.”⁶

A month after the Stone Church Convention drew to a close, delegates assembled June 14-23 at Edinburgh were expressing similar expectations about the outcomes of their well-attended, widely-advertised, meticulously-planned and methodically-orchestrated World Missionary Conference (WMC). In his concluding address, chairman and missionary statesman John R. Mott reiterated the prevailing conviction that “carrying the Gospel to all the non-Christian world” was the urgent

task for which God had been empowering the Western Protestant churches. “The end of the Conference is the beginning of the conquest,” he decreed. “Though there have been no signs and sounds and wonders as of the rushing wind, God has been silently and peacefully doing His work.... It is not His will that the influences set forth by Him shall cease this night. Rather shall they course out through us to the very ends of the earth.”⁷

Participants in both the Pentecostal Convention in Chicago and the WMC of 1910 believed that “Christianity stood on the threshold of a global expansion of millennial dimensions” and that God would continue to work through evangelical messengers to spread the gospel to the nations.⁸ Underlying these shared convictions, however, were subtle differences in emphasis and significant divergences in theological perspective that set these two groups apart. By analyzing these contrasts and their consequences for Protestant missions, this article explores the changing character of global Christianity in the twentieth century.

Scholars of twentieth-century Protestant missions have argued that Edinburgh delegates fundamentally misread “the signs of the future of Christianity,” including the robust expansion of Pentecostal movements that have transformed the shape of Christian faith around the globe since 1910. “One by one all of their assumptions about how the evangelization of the world could be effected crumbled away,” notes historian Andrew Walls.⁹

Christianity was “indeed to be transfigured over the next century,” Brian Stanley contends in his definitive study of the Edinburgh conference, “but not in the

way or through the mechanisms that they imagined.” Instead, Stanley suggests, “the most effective instrument of that transfiguration” was a diverse “miscellany of indigenous pastors, prophets, catechists and evangelists, men and women” who stood outside of the mainstream missions agencies represented at Edinburgh and “professed instead to rely on the simple transforming power of the Spirit and the Word.” The story of the Stone Church Convention offers a starting point for assessing the profound changes that early Pentecostal missionaries helped to initiate.¹⁰

“They Need the Simple Gospel”: Pentecostal Qualms about Christian Civilization

One of the most salient disparities between the architects of the WMC and the leaders of the Stone Church Convention centered on their differing perspectives on Western “civilization.” While the Pentecostals who gathered in Chicago were clear about the contrast between “heathen darkness” and “gospel light,” they seemed less certain than their Edinburgh counterparts that these categories clearly corresponded with the “civilized Christian West” and “the non-Christian world.” Depravity, they believed, was not necessarily determined by geography, nationality, or race; in fact, the “Occidental” could be just as susceptible to sin as the “Oriental.”

Preaching in the Stone Church on March 3, 1910, evangelist Charles F. Hettiaratchy, “a native of Ceylon” who “had a very deep baptism in the Holy Spirit,” challenged potential missionaries who wanted “to go and convert the heathen” to ask: “Have you been used in this country to convert the heathen here?” Heathenism, he contended, was not only abroad but also within.¹¹ The devil was active everywhere Pentecostals believed; therefore, even so-called “Christian” lands and institutions were susceptible to corruption.¹²

In fact, many Pentecostals criticized American culture and questioned the supposed superiority of Western civilization. Unlike Edinburgh delegates who were “certain that Christianity and civilization were divinely ordained to proceed from the West to the world,” Pentecostals worried that Western Christians had abandoned biblical authority and turned away from God.¹³ As a result, Pentecostal



Paul Bettex (1864-1916), early Pentecostal missionary who died in China. Born in Switzerland and the son of a distinguished Christian apologist, Bettex studied at the University of Geneva, various Italian schools, the Sorbonne, and Princeton Theological Seminary. He was a missionary in South America in the 1890s and moved to America in 1903. He attended meetings at the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, joined the ranks of the Pentecostals, and in 1910 headed for China. This photo, circa 1900, was taken in Argentina.

missionaries condemned the notion that civilizing was a necessary prerequisite for Christianizing.

In a 1909 address delivered at the Stone Church, for example, veteran missionary Archibald Forder insisted that the Arab people among whom he worked did not “need civilization.” In fact, Forder argued, an increase in trade and the introduction of Western ways would undermine exemplary aspects of Arabian society — particularly the prohibition against destructive “intoxicants” such as alcohol and opium. “I am anxious for only one thing,” Forder proclaimed, “that they get Jesus Christ. As sure as civilization gets in, they will become contaminated with the curses of civilization ... they do not need electric cars, railroads, and all these things we think are necessary.... They need the simple Gospel.”¹⁴

Pentecostals were not the only missionaries who expressed ambivalence about how features of Western civilization would affect indigenous cultures. For decades prior to the 1910 WMC, missionaries from a variety of denominations had protested against the opium trade in China, the liquor traffic in Africa, and the legalization of prostitution in India. Each of these “evils,” they argued, was exacerbated if not caused by Western agents and impeded efforts to Christianize local

societies. In responses to questionnaires sent out by the WMC’s organizers, some missionaries complained that the immoral (and imperial) behavior of European traders and officials constituted “a great barrier to the spread of the Gospel.”

The official report of Edinburgh’s commissioners additionally warned that “the spread of infidel and rationalistic ideas and materialistic views ... traceable to western sources” threatened “the extension of Christ’s Kingdom.” Despite these concerns, most WMC delegates remained convinced that the “pure and hopeful influences of western civilization” would triumph over “antagonistic” pressures so long as the Church mustered “all its powers on behalf of the world without Christ.”¹⁵ “The voice most audible in the public sessions of the conference,” Brian Stanley asserts, “was one of boundless optimism and unsullied confidence in the ideological and financial power of western Christendom.”¹⁶

For both theological and social reasons, Pentecostals simply did not share this sanguine outlook. By the early twentieth century, most radical evangelicals had embraced a premillennial eschatology that predicted Christ’s imminent return after a period of pervasive and rapid decay. In contrast to their counterparts at the WMC, the majority of whom still subscribed to the more optimistic postmillennial view, participants at the Stone Church believed that “the world to-day is wobbling in its orbit, madly plunging towards despair and destruction.”¹⁷ As Pentecostal missionary Albert Norton put it, “The signs are multiplying that the world is out of joint on a scale that it never was before.... What does this portend ... but the greatest national overthrow, ruin and disaster, that the world has ever seen.” Civilization, from this perspective, was a slender reed upon which to rest one’s hopes.¹⁸

“We Are Made One in the Spirit”: Pentecostals and Missionary Science

A second, and related, distinction between delegates at Edinburgh and attendees at the Stone Church Convention was the extent to which each group stressed the centrality of technological developments and scientific methods for the missionary enterprise. As historians have pointed out, premillennial pessimism about the prospects of contemporary society and Western

civilization did not preclude Pentecostals from making full use of modern technologies for missionary purposes.¹⁹ While they interpreted the “increased modes and rapidity of travel, evidenced by railways, steam ships, electrical devices, liquid air, telephone, telegraph, wireless telegraphy ... within the past one hundred years” as “signs of the imminence of our Lord’s return,” participants in the holiness and Pentecostal movements eagerly employed

in the evangelistic enterprise, they were apt to downplay “signs and sounds and wonders,” in favor of “ascertained and sifted facts.”²⁴

Organizers of the Stone Church Convention did just the opposite. Rather than systematically collecting data and presenting their findings in carefully crafted reports on practical policy, they insisted that mighty manifestations of supernatural power were precisely what was needed for

ventions confirmed this conviction. Recalling that the first person to receive “the baptism of the Holy Ghost” during the recent Pentecostal revival in India was an “ignorant little mite named JeeJee” who went on to become one of the movement’s leaders, missionary Minnie Abrams argued that the Holy Spirit empowered individuals for service regardless of their age, social status, intellectual sophistication, or even theological acumen.²⁸ From this

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these resources as they worked to cultivate a universal Christian fellowship.²⁰

Communication tools were especially instrumental in helping Pentecostals (and other Christians) to nurture a sense of worldwide community that transcended territorial borders, cultural boundaries, and social barriers. Periodicals such as the *Latter Rain Evangel* explicitly sought to forge bonds among like-minded believers across the globe. On the periodical’s second anniversary, the editor rejoiced that the paper had fostered “a blessed fellowship with God’s dear children all over the world.”²¹ By embracing communication and travel technologies in order to create translocal connections, Pentecostals participated in broader patterns characteristic of many social and religious movements in an increasingly international era.²² Gatherings like the Stone Church Convention and the WMC of 1910 both reflected and contributed to the globalization of Christianity during this period.

While participants in these events eagerly employed modern means to spread the gospel and promote Christian unity, Pentecostals were less convinced than their Edinburgh peers that the success of these endeavors depended on the development and “advancement of missionary science.” As Brian Stanley has shown, conveners of the WMC “believed that the time had come for the application of the rigorous methods of modern social science to the challenges and problems which missionaries faced on the field.”²³ Although spokespersons like John Mott acknowledged the role of the Holy Spirit

inaugurating a new era in world evangelization. “It isn’t in my thought to go into the matter of statistics,” declared missionary “stalwart” Levi Lupton at the Stone Church Convention. Instead, he and other speakers put particular emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit to bridge divides and create attachments.²⁵

“This is the intent of Pentecost,” evangelist D. Wesley Myland proclaimed: “that my heart might be bound with men and women in Africa, in Japan, in the fastness of Tibet. That my spirit might be bound with men and women in India and we are made one in working out the purposes of God.”²⁶

William Piper, pastor of the Stone Church, contended that Holy Spirit baptism was not only drawing together believers of different nations, but also uniting Christians across doctrinal and class lines. “In this, His Pentecostal sweep of the earth, ... God is doing a marvelous thing in reaching down into every denomination, and reaching down into the slums where there is no denomination, and baptizing His disciples,” Piper proclaimed. “What else could so effectually break down bigotry than the fact that God is bigger than our denominational difference? Thus there is left little or no room for one set of people to exalt themselves over another.”²⁷ According to Piper, the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit leveled hierarchies in ways that enabled Pentecostal missionaries to surmount spatial, social and theological separations in pursuit of a global fellowship.

Many speakers at Stone Church con-

ventions confirmed this conviction. Recalling that the first person to receive “the baptism of the Holy Ghost” during the recent Pentecostal revival in India was an “ignorant little mite named JeeJee” who went on to become one of the movement’s leaders, missionary Minnie Abrams argued that the Holy Spirit empowered individuals for service regardless of their age, social status, intellectual sophistication, or even theological acumen.²⁸ From this

perspective, statistical analysis, scientific expertise and technological advancement were secondary (if not irrelevant) to the practice of missions or the creation of a global church. The Stone Church strongly promoted missionary evangelism through reports in its monthly publication, the *Latter Rain Evangel*, as well as through its semi-annual conventions. The church also hosted the second General Council in November 1914 and the seventh General Council in 1919. At the second General Council, Lemuel C. Hall²⁹ of Chicago framed a very important resolution, which was unanimously adopted by the Council:

As a Council, we hereby express our gratitude to God for His great blessing upon the movement in the past. We are grateful to Him for the results attending this forward movement and we commit ourselves and the movement to Him for the greatest evangelism that the world has ever seen. We pledge our hearty co-operation, prayers and help to this end.³⁰

In spite of the remarkable advancement of Protestant missions during the preceding “great century” of the expansion of Christianity, this was an ambitious commitment for the Assemblies of God delegates. This 1914 pledge to the “greatest evangelism that the world has ever seen” dovetailed exactly with the missions ideals promoted at the Stone Church Convention four years earlier.

“I Will Pour Out My Spirit on All Flesh”: Pentecostal Missionaries and Indigenous Leadership

Minnie Abrams’s account of the revival in India reveals a third contrast between Pentecostal approaches to missions and the dominant assumptions on display at Edinburgh. As the story of JeeJee suggests, Pentecostals were open to the possibility that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit had initiated a great reversal — not only collapsing hierarchical distinctions between Western missionaries and local believers, but even beginning to re-center Christian leadership in “heathen” lands. While most delegates at the Edinburgh WMC endorsed the “formation, growth and nurture” of self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating national churches as “the central goal of all foreign missionary activity,” they were less confident than their Pentecostal peers that the experience of Holy Spirit baptism qualified native converts to serve as partners in the missionary enterprise, let alone leaders of indigenous churches.³¹

In fact, the issue of relationships among missionaries and national Christians was a major topic of discussion — and a source of consternation — among participants in the WMC. V. S. Azariah, an Anglican clergyman from South India who had helped to establish the indigenous Indian National Missionary Society, highlighted this concern in an address entitled “The Problem of Co-operation Between Foreign and Native Workers” that he delivered at Edinburgh on the evening of June 20th.³²

“The official relationship generally prevalent at present between the missionary and the Indian worker is that between a master and servant,” he declared. “As long as this relationship exists, we must admit that no sense of self-respect and individuality can grow in the Indian church.” Taking the “problem of race relationships” head-on, Azariah asserted that “bridging the gulf between East and West, and the attainment of a greater unity and common ground in Christ” was essential if the Indian church was ever to become self-governing. Although he conceded that both sides were to blame for the unequal situation, Azariah challenged “the foreign missionary” to offer “proofs of a real willingness ... to show that he is in the midst of the people, to be to them, not a lord or a

master, but a brother and a friend.”³³

According to observers, Azariah’s speech went off “like a bomb” in the “electric silence” of Edinburgh’s Assembly Hall. While a few attendees appreciated Azariah’s challenge, others protested and some argued that he ought to be publicly censured. According to conference historian Brian Stanley, “Most of the Christian press either ignored his address or took exception to it.... Hardly anyone in the Western churches in 1910 seemed ready to listen.”³⁴

But if Azariah’s admonitions fell on deaf ears in Edinburgh, his sentiments resonated with partisans of the Pentecostal movement who were making similar proposals. Although few Pentecostals attended the WMC, a number of correspondents — including American Agnes



William Hamner Piper was the founder of the Stone Church and editor of the *Latter Rain Evangel*.

Hill who served as the national secretary for the YWCA in India, and Eveline Alice Luce of the British Church Missionary Society — had participated in the Holy Spirit revivals that swept through many places across the world in 1904 through 1906.

These women had become part of the emerging global Pentecostal network even as they remained connected with their sponsoring missionary agencies. In responses to questionnaires sent out by Edinburgh’s organizers, both Luce and Hill identified social distance and unequal partnerships between Western missionaries and the people with whom they worked as major challenges to spreading the gospel. Luce wrote that the “different economic

circumstances of missionary and people ... is one of the most difficult problems in our missionary work,” in India. “We long to get near the people among whom we work, and we mourn the fact that a great gulf seems to separate us from them as we live in such a different style and with so much more of what to them is luxury.”³⁵ Hill concurred with this assessment. “This difference is a great stumbling block,” she wrote. Both women acknowledged that social and economic disparities often reflected and exacerbated relational rifts between missionaries and local communities. The perception that Indians — even those who embraced Christianity — were inferior to Westerners rankled indigenous believers and frustrated cooperative efforts. “Many in the native church resent the call to work under the missionary,” Hill admitted.³⁶ Luce agreed, blaming a hierarchical and inequitable pay structure for perpetuating interactions that mirrored the dynamics of imperial rule.

Based on their experiences in the India revivals, both Hill and Luce echoed Azariah’s recommendations for bridging “the gulf between missionary and native helper.” In fact, Hill’s recommendations for fostering reciprocal relationships were more radical than Azariah’s proposals. Where he called for an increase in missionary hospitality — encouraging Europeans to shake hands with their Indian workers and to invite them to dinner — Hill exhorted missionaries to adopt a “simpler life,” challenging unmarried workers to cohabit with their “native helpers, taking them all into his bungalow as brothers or in the case of the woman as sisters.”³⁷

Although Luce’s proposals for missionary living arrangements were more modest than Hill’s, Luce agreed that missionaries should strive to live more simply “in small tents” or “rest-houses ... thus getting as near to the daily lives of the people as possible, and living in their presence, as it were, seeking to shew [sic] them that Christ is not merely the Savior of the West, but that He is an Oriental Saviour, and His salvation comes down to the little details of everyday life.” Like Hill, Luce believed that proximity and humility were essential for cultivating mutual affection and for revising presumptions about the superiority of Western Christianity.³⁸

For both Luce and Hill, the most significant factor in spreading the gospel and creating multiracial, intercultural, egali-

tarian friendships among Christians was the Holy Spirit. In keeping with William Piper's conviction that the baptism in the Spirit was essential for vanquishing social and theological chauvinism, Hill contended that "what the whole missionary body yes and the Indian Church and the Church at home need most is a special equipment of power from on High to put things into proper perspective and to make the message *effective* as the Master intended it to be."³⁹

Luce was even more adamant. Describing the revival that had spread through India in recent years, she recounted how the Holy Spirit had surmounted seemingly insuperable divides. "We have seen ... how He takes up the poor and illiterate and does wondrous works through them, how His presence is like a Fire, melting down all barriers, uniting the whole church (native and foreign) and melting them together as *one* in the love of Jesus, and how He sets them on fire with love and zeal for the salvation of souls." Given this evidence, Luce told the organizers of the Edinburgh Conference, it only made sense to conclude that "the answer to all these difficult questions" of missionary endeavor, "the one all-important need" was "a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Christian Church in every land."⁴⁰

Despite the testimony of missionaries like Luce, Hill, Azariah and Abrams, leaders of the Edinburgh Conference concluded that relying solely on the transforming power of the Spirit was not wholly sufficient for spreading the gospel. Although Edinburgh's commissioners did acknowledge that "it seems evident that the Indian Church must ultimately be under the guidance and control of Indian Christians," their final report suggested that a such a transfer of power could only take place after proper "development and education of the native church."⁴¹

For Pentecostals eagerly anticipating Christ's imminent return, such a gradual approach seemed impractical. Time was short, the task was urgent, and the Holy Spirit was anointing workers all over the world to spread the message of repentance and salvation. Drawing on biblical passages such as Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17, which promised that "in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh," participants in the Stone Church Convention claimed that this long-awaited prophecy was being fulfilled in the present

— and they acted accordingly.

"Bridging the Gulf Between East and West"? Pentecostal Missions in Practice

Several months after the conventions in Chicago and Edinburgh concluded, Minnie Abrams returned to India with a group of seven women who shared her belief that the baptism in the Holy Ghost was the indispensable key to the evangelization of the nations and the unity of the Christian church. Forming the "only known Pentecostal women's missionary society" — the Bezaleel Evangelistic Mission — these women strove to embody the ethos and ideals that speakers at the Stone Church convention promoted.

As faith missionaries relying on God rather than an established organization for their financial support, they were also poised to practice close relations with local people that experienced missionaries like Luce, Hill and Azariah were advocating. With little advanced training, no language skills, and limited monetary resources, Abrams's recruits were compelled to live simply in close proximity with the native population, and to partner with the Indian Christians upon whom they were in many ways dependent.⁴²

Moving out into the "regions beyond" where few missionaries had gone before meant that Bezaleel workers were often the only Westerners in their area. Writing back to her Stone Church supporters one year after sailing with Abrams, Blanche Cunningham described the "pioneer work" she and Lillian Doll had undertaken in Basti, North India. "Outside of one or two officials there is no one here but Indian people," she wrote. Nor was there any European-style housing. When they eventually procured facilities abandoned by a British mission, Doll "moved in at once, even before it was fit to live in, and slept on the floor with the rats and moles crawling around."

Cunningham lived in another building "with the Indian girls" who were to be her partners in village evangelism. By forgoing the comforts typical of most missionary compounds, by eating "chapatis" and other Indian food, and by sharing a home with their Indian coworkers, Doll and Cunningham practiced what Edinburgh correspondents such as Luce and Hill preached. As a result, the "gulf" that

separated these Western women from their "native helpers" was narrower, and reciprocal relationships that encouraged mutual esteem developed more readily.⁴³

From their arrival in India, the Bezaleel novices worked closely with Bible women and native preachers. In letters sent back to the Stone Church, missionaries praised their Indian associates, presenting them as fellow workers and exemplary Christian evangelists to the home audience. "Nannu was a carpenter," Abrams wrote of one convert who joined their mission in North India. "He can hardly read and make up his accounts, but does most of my business and is a leader among the others. His wife ... is the 'mother in Israel' at Uska Bazar."⁴⁴ Although they did value basic Christian training and the ability to read the Bible, missionaries like Abrams could overlook a lack of literacy as irrelevant if the Holy Spirit anointed workers such as Nannu to preach the gospel.

Believing that the Pentecostal revival that began in 1905⁴⁵ had inaugurated a new era in Indian Christianity, Abrams exhorted American believers to come alongside the "spirit-filled young people" who were ready to "go out to evangelize their own people." Having "seen the Holy Spirit poured out in marvelous power upon the Indian Christian church," Abrams was certain that the evangelization of India would proceed primarily through native converts in partnership with Western Pentecostals who could serve as helpmeets to their "yokefellows" through both intercessory prayer and physical presence.⁴⁶

Indian Christians touched by the Pentecostal revivals agreed with Abrams's assessment. "India is awakening. God is speaking to our age and to our land in the mighty reviving work of His Spirit ... The spirit of Pentecost is arousing the Church today," declared the founders of the Indian National Missionary Society in December of 1905. Organized by Azariah and other Indian church leaders, this interdenominational association urged Indian Christians to recognize "the solemn obligation alike of ownership and of opportunity, of sacrifice and responsibility."⁴⁷

According to historian Gary McGee, this "appeal to Indian Christians" to evangelize their own nation was an outgrowth of the "greater indigenization of the faith" that resulted from India's Pentecostal awakening. "The Spirit's outpouring," McGee argues, "signaled that the hour for

indigenous leadership had arrived.”⁴⁸

When Minnie Abrams and her American apprentices arrived in Bombay in October of 1910, self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating Indian churches of any theological persuasion were still more of a future hope than a present reality. Despite their affirmation of the “three-self” principle, most denominational missionaries postponed the process of transferring power to indigenous leaders for decades after the Edinburgh Conference.

This became the experience of some Pentecostals. Although they were more apt to acknowledge the authority of Spirit-filled evangelists, to see their “native helpers” as equal partners in the task of spreading the gospel, and even to live in intimate proximity with their non-Western associates, Pentecostals sometimes “struggled to turn over the reins of control.” Once the floodwaters of revival receded and Christ had not yet returned, some Pentecostal missionaries followed in the footsteps of their denominational predecessors by establishing mission stations, maintaining a distance from Indian partners, and, as Gary McGee puts it, “retaining tight control over local pastors and evangelists by paying them with funds raised in North America.”⁴⁹

In his recent comprehensive survey of Pentecostal missions, McGee also asserts that Pentecostals were not immune to the “cultural prejudices” and anxieties that came along with their privileged status as Westerners in an imperial setting. “Like most Westerners who lived abroad,” he contends, “Pentecostal missionaries accepted their racial and cultural superiority as a given.”⁵⁰

His observations suggest that the Spirit-filled women and men who resisted the rhetoric of civilization and insisted that “the Gospel of Jesus Christ makes us all one, no matter of what race or color we are,” were somewhat unusual.⁵¹ In fact, leaders of the Stone Church do seem to have been more committed to pursuing what they termed “cosmopolitan” interests and sympathies than some of their Pentecostal peers.⁵² They were also less inclined to engage in doctrinal hair-splitting or heresy-hunting. From the first issue of the *Latter Rain Evangel* in 1908, contributors condemned the rampant theological controversies that were undermining unity in

the Holy Spirit and distracted believers from the primary task of cultivating a universal Christian community.⁵³

As the Pentecostal movement developed more structure through the establishment of denominations such as the Assemblies of God in 1914, however, the

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— Gary B. McGee

doctrinal fluidity and irenic posture to which Stone Church leaders were dedicated in the early years became increasingly difficult to maintain. On the “mission field,” the drive for greater organization and standardization pushed some Pentecostals to adopt “paternalistic practices” that impeded the expansion of indigenous leadership and mutuality.

Within several years, the Foreign Missions Department of the Assemblies of God was wrestling with many of the same strategic dilemmas that dominated the agenda at Edinburgh: what methods of evangelism were most effective, whether charitable or humanitarian efforts “paid” or fostered dependency, and how to promote a self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating church.⁵⁴

Conclusion: “The Baptism in the Holy Ghost Should Make Us World-Wide”

Despite the obstacles that increasing organization erected between Pentecostal missionaries and their indigenous associates, many of the subtle tendencies that distinguished participants in the Stone Church Convention from delegates at the Edinburgh WMC of 1910 continued to shape how Spirit-filled Christians envisioned and enacted the creation of a global fellowship in years to come. “The baptism in the Holy Ghost should make us world-wide. It should enlarge us,” Minnie Abrams proclaimed in 1911.⁵⁵ When she and the American women of the Bezaleel

Evangelistic Mission partnered with Indian evangelists and Bible women to spread the gospel in small villages like Basti and Uska Bazar, they acted on a set of assumptions that would become increasingly influential among Christian communities over the course of the twentieth century.

First, Western civilization was not equivalent with the kingdom of God and missionaries had no monopoly on God’s grace. Second, while Christians might use all available means — including the improved methods of travel and communication — to spread the gospel, their success hinged on the Holy Spirit not on a supposed technological or cultural superiority. Third, in these “last days” the love of Christ was eliminating “all distinctions of race or color,” binding people of “all color, caste and nationality” into “one unified, sympathetic body.”⁵⁶

Within this context, the “latter rain” of God’s Holy Spirit was anointing individuals of every age, social background, economic class, and ethnic origin to serve as leaders of the Pentecostal revival. Because God was “no respecter of persons,” missionaries needed to acknowledge the authority of Spirit-filled native workers, working in close proximity and partnership with their fellow evangelists to “convert the heathen” of every nation. During the ensuing century, Pentecostal evangelists of all “kindreds and tongues” adopted this approach, spreading Spirit-filled faith “to the uttermost parts of the earth,” and in so doing transformed both the nature of the Protestant missionary enterprise and the shape of global Christianity.⁵⁷ ❖

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NOTES

¹W. H. Cossum, "A Glorious Convention," *Latter Rain Evangel* (LRE) (June 1910): 2.

²*Ibid.*, 3-4.

³*Ibid.*, 2.

⁴A tentative ending date listed in the *Latter Rain Evangel* was May 29th, which would anticipate the meeting lasting for about two weeks, but it was reported that the previous year's convention ended up being extended from 10 days to 25. "Chicago Convention," *LRE* (April 1910): 12-13.

⁵Cossum, "A Glorious Convention," 4.

⁶*Ibid.*, 5.

⁷World Missionary Conference, 1910, *History and Records of the Conference Together with Addresses Delivered at the Evening Meetings* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; and New York, Chicago, and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d. [1910]), 247. The definitive history of the World Missionary Conference is Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), hereafter *WMC*.

⁸Stanley, *WMC*, 2.

⁹Andrew F. Walls, "From Christendom to World Christianity: Missions and the Demographic Transformation of the Church," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 22:3 (2001): 306-330.

¹⁰Stanley, *WMC*, 17.

¹¹Charles F. Hettiaratchy, "But the Greatest of These is Love," *LRE* (May 1910): 9-13. For an astute analysis of early Pentecostal views on civilization, see Jay R. Case, "And Ever the Twain Shall Meet: The Holiness Missionary Movement and the Birth of World Pentecostalism, 1870-1920," *Religion & American Culture* 16:2 (2006): 125-159.

¹²S. H. Auernheimer, "Go, Let Go, Help Go: a Plea for the Millions of India," *LRE* (Apr. 1913), 16; and Mrs. C. W. Doney, "Called to the Mission Field At Five," *LRE* (Sept. 1913): 8-10.

¹³Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals, "Saving the World? The Changing Terrain of American Protestant Missions," <http://isae.wheaton.edu/projects/missions> (accessed June 10, 2010).

edu/projects/missions (accessed June 10, 2010).

¹⁴A. Forder, "And Ishmael Will Be a Wild Man: Thrilling Experiences in the Land of Sand and Sun," *LRE* (August 1909): 2-7.

¹⁵World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Report of Commission I: Carrying the Gospel to All the Non-Christian World* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; and New York, Chicago, and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d. [1910]), 21-25.

¹⁶Stanley, *WMC*, 16.

¹⁷George P. Pardington, *Twenty-Five Wonderful Years, 1889-1914: A Popular Sketch of the Christian and Missionary Alliance* (1914; reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, 1984), 61-64, and 103. See Stanley, *WMC*, 1-3 for a discussion of the eschatological views on display at Edinburgh.

¹⁸Albert Norton, "Does God Still Answer Prayer?" *LRE* (October 1911): 23-24.

¹⁹On this point, see especially Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); and Case, "Ever the Twain Shall Meet," 136-137.

²⁰"Some of the Signs of the Imminence of Our Lord's Return," *Triumphs of Faith* (October 1900): 246.

²¹"We Are Two Years Old," *LRE* (September 1910): 2-3.

²²As Benedict Anderson and others have persuasively argued the use of new communication technologies was a key factor in the development of both national and transnational affiliations in the modern era; see his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1983).

²³Stanley, *WMC*, 4.

²⁴*WMC, History and Records of the Conference*, 247.

²⁵Levi R. Lupton, "'Wilt Thou Go with This Man?' A Strong Plea for Heathen Evangelization," *LRE* (June 1910): 18.

²⁶D. Wesley Myland, "The Fifth Latter Rain Lecture," *LRE* (September 1909): 16.

²⁷William Piper, "The Lord Reigneth! He is Clothed With Majesty," *LRE* (December 1909): 7-11.

²⁸Minnie Abrams, "How the Recent Revival Was Brought About in India," *LRE* (July 1909), 6-13; and Minnie Abrams, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire* (Kedgaon, India: Mukti Mission Press, 1906), v.

²⁹Stone Church pastor William Piper and Lemuel C. Hall both had previously been associated with John Alexander Dowie's Christian Catholic Church, headquartered in Zion City, Illinois, just north of Chicago. Dowie was a prominent advocate of divine healing and was intensely evangelistic, with the result that he established a number of mission stations across the globe. See Gordon P. Gardiner, *Out of Zion Into All the World* (Shippensburg, PA: Companion Press, 1990).

³⁰*Combined Minutes of the General Council*, April-November 1914, 12.

³¹Stanley, *WMC*, 132.

³²This was the title of an address by Rev. V. S. Azariah at the World Missionary Conference.

³³*WMC, History and Records of the Conference*, 306-315.

³⁴Stanley, *WMC*, 126-8.

³⁵"Report to the Commission by Miss Eveline A. Luce," World Missionary Conference (WMC) papers, series 1, box 3, folder 9, Missionary Research Library (MRL) Series 12, the Burke Library Archives (Columbia University Archives) at Union Theological

Seminary (UTS), New York.

³⁶"Report to the Commission by Miss Agnes Gale Hill," WMC papers, series 1, box 3, folder 6, MRL Series 12, UTS, New York.

³⁷"Report by Agnes Gale Hill."

³⁸"Report by Eveline A. Luce."

³⁹"Report by Agnes Gale Hill."

⁴⁰"Report by Eveline A. Luce."

⁴¹*Report of Commission I*, 308.

⁴²On Abrams and the Bezaleel Evangelistic Mission, see Gary B. McGee, *Miracles, Missions and American Pentecostalism* (New York: Orbis Books, 2010), especially pages 133-137.

⁴³Blanche Cunningham, "Through Death to Life: Some of the Trials of Young Missionaries," *LRE* (November 1911): 17-19.

⁴⁴Minnie Abrams, "Prayer Answered in North India," *LRE* (August 1911): 14-16.

⁴⁵The "Indian Pentecost" of 1905-1906 is described in McGee, "Miracles," pages 81-84.

⁴⁶Abrams, "Recent Revival," 7, 12; Minnie Abrams, "The Midnight Darkness of India's Superstition," *LRE* (August 1910): 6-12.

⁴⁷"An Appeal to Indian Christians by the Founders of the National Missionary Society" (1905), in *History of Christianity in India*, ed. M. K. Kuriakose (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1982), 292-93; quoted in McGee, *Miracles*, 84.

⁴⁸McGee, *Miracles*, 85.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 167; and Gary B. McGee, "Missions, Overseas (N. American Pentecostal)" in *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Rev. exp. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 896.

⁵⁰McGee, *Miracles*, 165-167.

⁵¹Auernheimer, "Go, Let Go, Help Go," 15.

⁵²Anna C. Reiff, "Fifteen Days With God: Seasons of Refreshing at the Stone Church Convention," *LRE* (June 1915): 16.

⁵³See, for example, "Manifestations and 'Demonstrations' of the Spirit," *LRE* (October 1908): 16-20; Minnie F. Abrams, "His Visage Was So Marred More Than Any Man: Our Acts of Unkindness Mar the Face of Jesus," *LRE* (June 1909): 10-13; William H. Piper, "The Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace," *LRE* (June 1911): 14-17; and Lydia M. Piper "The Unity of the Spirit," *LRE* (February 1912): 16-19.

⁵⁴For a discussion of how organization within the Assemblies of God affected Pentecostal missions, see McGee, "Missions, Overseas," 896; and *Miracles*, especially chapters 7 and 8. The idea of a self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating church (also known as the indigenous church principle) was promoted by Anglican missionary Roland Allen in his *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (1912) and by Assemblies of God missionaries Alice Luce as early as 1921, and later by Melvin L. Hodges in his book, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1953).

⁵⁵Minnie Abrams, "The Object of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit," *LRE* (May 1911): 8-11.

⁵⁶Reiff, "Fifteen Days With God," 16; Maude Delaney, "Witnessing for Jesus in the Southland," *LRE* (April 1912): 6; and Piper, "The Lord Reigneth!" 9.

⁵⁷Reiff, "Fifteen Days With God," 16; and Agnes Hill, "Do Foreign Missions Pay?: The Transition of India," *LRE* (Jan. 1913): 7-12.