From Rocky Springs Park to the Orange Street Convention Hall:

The Origins Of Pentecostalism in Lancaster

By K. Daniel Armstrong

Change permeated the air of America at the beginning of the twentieth century. "The Progressive Era," as it came to be known, was marked by political, economic, and social reform. Those would-be reshapers of society, the Progressives, were basically middle-class moralists attempting to awaken the conscience of the nation in order to clean up American life. These individuals sought to address and effect their proposed alterations within the established system and its institutions. But changes occurred in American society outside of the scope of the white-collar classes during the same time frame. In the nation's religious life a revival fire was ignited that spread from coast to coast and then leapt across the oceans of the world. This revival challenged long-held doctrines and practices of American Protestantism. This infant movement, Pentecostalism, like middle-class Progressivism confronted societal norms concerning women, blacks, and the poor, but sought change through an individual's encounter with God's spirit rather than through the redemption of political or economic institutions.

Pentecostalism found its way into Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in the summer of 1907 through a seminary student who had rejected its tenets only a year before. In the pages that follow the author will provide a brief recounting of Pentecostalism's historical and theological origins as well as its introduction and establishment in the city of Lancaster.[1]

As American society wrestled with the economic and political forces that had gripped it in the late nineteenth century, marginal Protestants also began to struggle with the concept of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. What was Holy Spirit baptism? The Acts of the Apostles and Paul's first letter to the Corinthians mentioned the phenomenon, but had not that activity ceased with the first or second church generation after Christ? Could a contemporary Christian be Holy Spirit baptized and, if so, how would that individual and the church know that the experience was genuine? After centuries of silence these questions began to be asked in the years that followed the Civil War.

In the late 1890s a midwestern Methodist-reared Holiness evangelist, Charles Fox Parham, attempted to address the Holy Spirit question.[2] In 1898 Parham founded the Beth-el Healing Home in Topeka, Kansas. But after only a year the administrative strain took its toll. He suffered a nervous breakdown in September 1899. Since entering the ministry Parham had been shaping his own brand of theology and doctrine that centered on divine healing. During this process, which intensified while he was recuperating from the nervous breakdown, Parham drew upon the teachings of several better known contemporaries including John Dowie's Chicago-based healing ministry, Dwight L. Moody's combination of Reformed theology, personal piety, and premillennialism, Reuben A. Torrey's idea of an emerging world-wide revival, as well as the Keswickian emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Keswickian theology, which grew out of annual camp meetings held in Keswick, England, advocated that Christians received spiritual power that strengthened their commitment and character.[3] But most intriguing to Parham was Benjamin H. Irwin's "third blessing." Irwin, a Wesleyan with Baptist roots, argued that beyond conversion and sanctification lay the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire" which was accompanied by an emotional outburst displayed through shouts, screams, and "the jerks." In 1898 Irwin founded the Fire-Baptized Holiness church which taught that the Holy Spirit baptism and the baptism of fire were two different happenings. Old-line Holiness leaders rejected Irwin's teachings as "a heresy." Of particular interest to Parham, however, was the notion that a distinct and unique event followed sanctification. Parham agreed with the Keswickians that this baptism included an endowment of spiritual power. Additionally, Parham believed that this second or third work was in some way similar to the apostles' experience in the book of Acts.

Relinquishing the Beth-el Home to others, Parham began the Bethel Bible College in the autumn of 1900. Its first, and only, class consisted of forty students. Parham lectured on a variety of subjects, but by December he was unsure how to approach the subject of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. So he gave his students the task of finding the scriptural evidence that accompanied its occurrence. He then left to conduct three days of meetings in Kansas City. Upon returning on New Year's Eve morning, he found a consensus among his pupils. They contended that "while there were different things [which] occurred when the Pentecostal blessing fell, that the indisputable proof on each occasion was, that they spake with other tongues." That night they began to pray for the reception of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. One student, Agnes Ozman, was Spirit baptized and "spoke in tongues." Within a month everyone else at Bethel, including Parham, was Spirit baptized.[4]

Eager to take his new message and experience to the world Parham closed the Bethel Bible College and began holding meetings throughout the midwest. Unsuccessful for over two years, Parham's voice finally fell upon receptive ears in the spring of 1903. And in December 1905 he decided to start a ministerial training school in Houston, Texas.[5]

Despite segregation laws which prohibited the mixing of whites and blacks, Parham admitted William J. Seymour, a one-eyed black evangelist from Louisiana, to the school. Under Parham's tutelage, Seymour became convinced of the scriptural truth of Pentecostal theology although he never spoke in tongues while at the school in Texas. In the spring of 1906, a small Negro Holiness church in Los Angeles invited Seymour to visit and preach. Seymour taught on the authenticity of Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues which infuriated the church elders who prevented him from returning for a second service. Undaunted, Seymour began holding meetings in a house on North Bonnie Brae Street but they were eventually moved to an abandoned lumber warehouse on Azusa Street. During the North Bonnie Brae Street meetings, Seymour experienced Spirit Baptism and spoke in tongues for the first time.[6] Within weeks, the Azusa Street meetings exploded into a revival that gained national attention. Services ran seven nights a week and were attended by over a thousand each evening for three years (1906-09).[7] From Los Angeles the Pentecostal movement stretched across the country and touched Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Though initiated by Charles F. Parham in the American midwest and perpetuated by William J. Seymour in Los Angeles, Pentecostalism has been the culmination of various doctrines, practices, and groups over the past nine decades. While different teachers and church bodies advocated particular items of interest, three central points of doctrine have developed that have been consistent in the vast majority of Pentecostal groups including the original congregation in Lancaster. These three key elements are: (1) the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the "initial evidence" of speaking in tongues; (2) an urgency for foreign missions; and (3) an eschatology with a strong emphasis on the imminent second coming of Christ.[8] In addition to a clear theological understanding of the movement the religious historian must also question the significance of Pentecostalism. Why was its emergence important to the story of Christianity? This query will be addressed after a brief discussion of the three points listed above.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was the pivotal tenet of the early or "classical" Pentecostal faith. The experiences described in the book of the Acts of the Apostles stood as the precedent on which Parham and his followers based their movement. Both John the Baptist (Mark 1:8) and Jesus (Acts 1:4-5) prophesied its occurrence. Apparently those promises were fulfilled in Acts 2:4. Afterwards, Peter spoke of the gift of the Holy Spirit being extended to "all who are far off" (Acts 2:39). Interpreting this statement as applicable to succeeding generations, early Pentecostals claimed that they had received God's promised gift and been baptized, or filled, with the Holy Spirit.[9]

As discussed earlier, Parham and others wrestled with the placement of Spirit Baptism in the Christian's conversion process. Was it a "second work of grace", or perhaps, even a third? Did it proceed or coincide with the work of sanctification? Upon review of the scriptures classical Pentecostals concluded that salvation was prior to Spirit Baptism. Even if conversion and Spirit Baptism occurred simultaneously, salvation always came first. Additionally, salvation and Spirit Baptism were distinct and separate experiences. One did not receive partial salvation upon conversion and complete salvation once baptized in the Holy Spirit. Rather, salvation was offered as a gift from God to sinners while Spirit Baptism was offered as a gift to saints.[10]

Of particular importance to Pentecostals was the "initial evidence" of speaking in tongues that accompanied the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. While other proofs could be offered, speaking in tongues was the most immediate evidence that Spirit Baptism had occurred. In justifying their argument, Pentecostals pointed to three examples in Acts (2:4, 10:45-46, and 19:6). In each episode, speaking in tongues promptly followed Spirit Baptism.[11]

What is "speaking in tongues?" Theologian Russell P. Spittler offers the following definition. Speaking in tongues is

> Usually, but not exclusively, the religious phenomenon of making sounds that constitute, or resemble, a language not known to the speaker. It is often accompanied by an excited religious psychological state, and in the Pentecostal and charismatic movements it is widely and distinctively (but not universally) viewed as the certifying consequence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.[12]

The Greek terms, glossolalia and xenolalia, further explain the phenomenon. Glossolalia refers to a form of tongues that is unrecognizable by either the speaker or any listener. Xenolalia, a type of glossolalia, is one of the over three thousand known languages that occur across the globe, but has not been learned by the speaker. The events described in Acts, chapter two, were xenolalic in nature. Parham derived from the Day of Pentecost episode that God would enable them to speak foreign languages without having to spend any time or money in language schools. Once one knew which language he or she was speaking, that individual could proceed to the appropriate country and begin missionary work. Succeeding Pentecostals have, however, rejected this notion.[13]

Furthermore, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was not bestowed merely to experience glossolalia alone. Again, based on Acts 2, Pentecostals argued that Spirit Baptism empowered the believing Christian to be an effective witness of the Gospel.[14] This divine impetus was necessary to carry out the second side of the theological triangle of Pentecostalism — foreign missions. Though discarding the idea of xenolalia as a tool for missions, the shortly-held tenet reflected the deep-seated motivation to evangelize the world. When Jesus had instructed his disciples to "Go into all the world . . ." and the early church fathers obeyed, Pentecostals enthusiastically and aggressively imitated the model. By 1915, Pentecostal missionaries had preached on all six of the inhabited continents.[15]

Eager to obey Jesus' command, the Pentecostals were also motivated by their third tenet — the almost immediate second coming of Christ to earth. Pentecostal thought claimed that the world's future hinged upon that one all important event. While this eschatological view was held by fundamentalists and others, Pentecostalism uniquely added that the "outpouring" of the Holy Spirit was a fulfillment of end-time prophecy in preparation of Jesus' return. Parham and his colleagues believed the Pentecostal movement to be the last great revival before the return of Christ and the rapture of the church. In other words, this was the world's final opportunity to right itself with God and it was the church's responsibility to propagate the message as effectively, powerfully, and quickly as possible.[16]

With a plainer understanding of Pentecostal thought and theology established, the significance of the movement within the context of religious history must be examined. Four factors constitute the movement's importance: (1) its eventual size and longevity, (2) its uniqueness as an American contribution to world Protestantism, (3) its role as a social outlet for the poor, blacks, and women, and (4) its elevation and emphasis on the personification of the Holy Spirit. From an abandoned hotel building in Topeka, Kansas, in 1900, the Pentecostal movement has exploded. By 1910, there were over 1.7 million Pentecostals worldwide. In 1970 that number had increased to approximately 75 million, and in the last twenty years, Pentecostal ranks have more than quadrupled to over 405 million adherents (1990) in 11,000 Pentecostal denominations and 3,000 charismatic groups. Pentecostals make up nearly one-quarter (23.5%) of all Christians world-wide.[17]

The second factor explaining classical Pentecostalism's historic significance was its uniquely American origin as an established religious grouping. While other Protestant churches can trace their roots back to European soil, Pentecostal theology and practice developed in the minds of American Christians who sought more from their religious experience. Thirdly, while some historians such as Robert M. Anderson attempt to fit Pentecostalism into a marxist model,[18] the movement did provide an outlet of expression for some of the nation's poor, blacks, and women. Before women had the right to vote in America, Pentecostal churches were ordaining them as pastors, evangelists, and missionaries. Additionally, the Azusa Street revival between 1906-09, experienced unprecedented racial harmony. Whites and blacks, only forty-one years after the conclusion of the Civil War, sat together at a common table of fellowship under black leadership. Finally, the movement reintroduced to Christianity the "almost entirely ignored" Holy Spirit. Classical Pentecostals portrayed the Holy Spirit as a distinct, intelligent person who had a will, showed love, spoke to individuals and entire church bodies, and could be grieved, insulted, outraged, lied to, and tested.

By the turn of the century Lancaster, Pennsylvania, had become an economically prosperous and religiously diverse city. Historian Israel S. Clare, writing in the late nineteenth century, portrayed a picture of Lancaster that would appeal to farmers and businessmen alike. As the "first of the counties of Pennsylvania in population and importance," Clare labelled Lancaster County the "Garden of America."[19] Tobacco production ruled the countryside as the county's chief agricultural product. Meanwhile, the city's economy prospered through a variety of "highly successful" wholesale ventures.[20]

Apart from its economic progress, Lancaster was also a city with a religious heritage. Originally colonized by Reformed Germans in the early eighteenth century, Lancaster eventually became home to a variety of congregations including African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist Brethren, Church of God, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish, Mennonite, Moravian, Reformed Mennonite, Swedenborgian, Unitarian, and United Brethren.[21]

Despite Lancaster's contemporary reputation as a quiet midsized American city steeped in tradition, the truth differed from the often-held perception. Prostitution was a well established institution. Over forty brothels sold their wares within a few blocks of the town square. Frequented by hundreds of men and boys, these whorehouses earned a combined weekly income between $6,000 and $9,000. "Lewd dances . . . vulgar" burlesque shows and gambling were commonplace. Intoxicated teenagers openly walked the streets after visiting one of the seventy-five saloons in Lancaster city.[22] To politically combat these problems, Dr. Clifford Twombley, rector of St. James's Episcopal Church, founded the Lancaster Law and Order Society in 1913. The Society eventually disbanded in 1973.[23] Against this backdrop of economic prosperity, varied religious traditions, and a growing moral bankruptcy, a spiritual revival would ultimately erupt attracting mass crowds, incorporating new technology, and challenging the way Lancasterians viewed and practiced their faith.

As the Asuza Street revival gained momentum in Los Angeles, Pentecostal missionaries and evangelists spread across the country. They frequented Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) meetings.[24] Most notably, Pentecostals made inroads at Alliance meetings at Beulah Park in Cleveland, Ohio, Beaver Falls and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Rocky Springs Park on the outskirts of Lancaster.[25] The Alliance never fully accepted Pentecostal teachings and attempted to hush such murmurings in their own ranks.

In mid-July 1907 the CMA was holding its twelfth annual convention. Anticipated to be "the greatest . . . they ever held," participants came from all over Pennsylvania as well as Maryland, New Jersey, and New York.[26] One of those attending the convention was a young theology student, David H. McDowell, from the CMA's Missionary Training Institute in Nyack, New York. McDowell had spurned Pentecostalism upon his first encounter with it in 1906.

But during the succeeding year, an increasing "hunger" to know God more deeply convinced him that the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the initial evidence of glossolalia would be the next appropriate step in his quest. During the convention McDowell spent countless hours in prayer and fasting to receive the baptism and the "gift of tongues."[27] "On the closing Sunday of the convention after many nights of prayer," McDowell recalled, "he lay 'prostrated' before the Lord from three-thirty a.m. until noon." When he got up he began to speak in tongues "in liquid clearness" for two hours.

Later that evening at the now officially concluded convention, McDowell attended a prayer meeting. An Alliance official asked McDowell to assist in praying for the attendees. All (approximately thirty-two), but three, were spirit-baptized and spoke in tongues. The following evening, McDowell was invited to Lancaster where he prayed with a Mennonite woman and her "backslidden" husband. The woman was spirit-baptized and spoke in tongues. Upon witnessing this extraordinary event, "the husband returned to the Lord."[28] In August McDowell returned to Nyack and shared his experiences with the student body.[29] Despite the efforts of the CMA hierarchy, Pentecostalism had come to Lancaster.

Little is known concerning Pentecostal activity in Lancaster in the years immediately following 1907. The CMA continued its annual summer meetings at Rocky Springs. It is within the realm of probability that Pentecostal expression occurred in these subsequent conventions, but a Pentecostal fellowship in Lancaster did not start until 1914. One possible connection between the 1907 convention and the beginnings of a church in 1914 was Omar Buchwalter. Buchwalter, a former Mennonite, had joined the Alliance sometime during the first decade of the century. His daughter, Gladys, remembered being taken to CMA meetings at Rocky Springs as a very young girl.[30] During one such meeting, perhaps as early as 1907, Omar Buchwalter could have been exposed to Pentecostal theology and practice.

In the autumn of 1914 a small group of people began holding prayer meetings in an apartment above the Southern Market in downtown Lancaster. Buchwalter played a key role. He and his family lived in the Southern Market apartment.[31] Those in attendance yearned for a "fresh manifestation" of God's power and the beginning of a revival. The group organized themselves into a church and sent a delegation to the first annual General Council of the newly formed Assemblies of God (AG) to petition for membership.[32] Once officially affiliated, the parishioners turned their attention to international missionary work. Ada R. Buchwalter, Omar's sister, left Lancaster for China.[33] By the spring of 1916 the Southern Market apartment was unable to contain the growing church (i.e., the Pentecostal Mission), so a hall was leased at 503 Church Street. Reuben L. Buchwalter, a farmer and Omar's older brother, acted as chairman of the meetings. He preached most of the sermons. The Pentecostal Mission remained at the Church Street location for three years. In the fall of

1917 the church hired the Rev. Albert J. Jenkins as its first pastor.[34] In the spring of 1919 the church relocated again. They leased an old Methodist church at 215 South Queen Street. That autumn the building was purchased from the Methodist Episcopal Church conference.[35]

Albert Jenkins resigned in 1921 though it is unknown why he did so. Short stints were not uncommon. In the thirteen years between 1917 and 1930, the Pentecostal Mission had four pastors. In the early days of the Assemblies of God this practice was quite common. Once a church had been firmly established a minister would move on to untouched soil which was ripe for revival. Jenkins was quickly replaced by the Rev. L.A. Hill. In January 1922 the Pentecostal Mission became chartered and incorporated under the name, First Pentecostal Church of Lancaster. This name was retained until the early 1950s when it was changed to First Assembly of God.[36] Over a year later the congregation moved again. In the spring of 1923, the church sold its building on South Queen Street to a Greek Orthodox group and bought the St. James's Episcopal Chapel, a former mission of St. James's Church, on the corner of Lime and Locust Streets.[37]

During the summers of 1923 and 1924, the Assemblies of God Eastern District camp meetings were held at Lancaster's Williamson Park. The "well attended" 1923 camp meeting featured E.F.M. Staudt, who had been a participant of the 1907 CMA/Rocky Springs convention.[38] The 1924 camp meeting was "considered the most successful camp meeting ever held under the auspices of the Assemblies of God" despite an oppressive heat wave with temperatures over one hundred degrees.[39] The conference's keynote speaker, Dr. Charles A. Shreve, emphasized divine healing, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the importance of foreign missions.[40]

L.A. Hill resigned as pastor of First Pentecostal Church of Lancaster in early 1925 and accepted the position of AG Eastern District Evangelist.[41] The Rev. Richard C. Garner filled the vacancy, but for only ten months. Taking the pastorate in June 1925, he stepped down in March 1926. The church remained without cleric leadership until October 1926, when the Rev. Vernon G. Gortner assumed the position of pastor. Gortner had been pastoring in Brooklyn, New York, for the four years prior to his relocation to Lancaster. Within six months of his arrival the church's increasing attendance (in excess of 250 people) and membership forced yet another move. In February 1927 First Pentecostal sold its Lime and Locust Streets facility and purchased the old Covenant United Brethren church at 328 West Orange Street.[42] Special services were held in mid-April to dedicate the building. Their guest speaker was none other than the Rev. David H. McDowell, who had been Spirit-baptized at the Rocky Springs/CMA convention almost twenty years earlier. Now known as the "midwest cyclone," apparently for his homiletic style, McDowell defined "The Purpose of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost" in his sermon.[43]

Besides relocating to a larger facility, First Pentecostal Church began utilizing the newest mass medium, radio, during Gortner's first year. The church also welcomed a visitor of national stature. Evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson stopped in Pennsylvania while traveling from Chicago to Washington, DC.[44]

Arriving in Lancaster on Friday morning, February 11, 1927, to begin four days of meetings, McPherson was immediately confronted by the local press who prodded her for information concerning her alleged kidnapping during the previous spring. "Sister Aimee" diverted the conversation by praising the accomplishments of her west coast ministry. McPherson had gained international attention in May 1926 when she disappeared while swimming off Venice Beach, California. At first it was believed that an accidental drowning had taken her life, but she reappeared a month later in Mexico explaining that she had been kidnapped by people who sought ransom money from her ministry. Rumors spread of an supposed affair between her and a former employee, Kenneth Ormiston. A grand jury investigated the matter and she was charged with obstruction of justice and suborning perjury, however the charges were eventually dropped for lack of evidence.[45] When Ormiston's name was mentioned, she yawned and asked an assistant if he was currently in Chicago or elsewhere in the midwest.

Though evasive on the kidnapping episode, McPherson was characterized by the reporter as an unimposing person with a "tremendous dramatic ability and sincere belief in her mission." But why did Gortner, after only five months at his new post, bring such a controversial figure into Lancaster? Possibly he might have simply been trying to gain publicity for First Pentecostal Church. If so, that strategy worked successfully. But the connection between the two ministers was deeper. Years before Gortner had been converted to Christianity in one of her crusades and had later served "for some time" as McPherson's worship leader.[46]

Her meetings, held in the Convention Hall at the southeast corner of West Orange and Pine Streets, were attended by thousands.[47] A glimpse of one such service is captured in part of an article reproduced below. The reporter provided an excellently detailed description of an early Pentecostal meeting.

> Though her sermon last night was her story of her life: it was no less a sermon. She called it her "testimony."
>
> At the close she called upon those who wished to consecrate their lives to God, or to reconsecrate themselves to raise their hands. Scores of hands went up all over the crowded hall and sobs and weeping mingled with her strident voice as she pleaded.
>
> Then she asked that they come forward and kneel at the altar in prayer and about a score answered her call wending their way through the crowded aisles, taking their places on the platform on bended knees. Several ministers in the audience responded to her plea for some help to pray with those who were struggling for salvation.
>
> Still she pleaded, her hypnotic voice rising above the softly-intoned notes of olden hymns and ushers cleared a space before the platform and placed chairs as mothers and fathers came with tear-strained, grief-distorted faces

> to pray for the sins of children and other loved ones.
>
> Men and women sobbed and prayed. A woman on the platform shrieked piercingly, and a clergyman went to comfort her. Far in the rear an unidentified woman was taken ill and removed to a side-room amid slight confusion.
>
> Then the evangelist led in prayer for those on the platform and the Benediction was pronounced.[48]

Lancaster had never witnessed such a spectacle of religious expression. After four days of meetings McPherson traveled to Baltimore.

Perhaps under Sister Aimee's influence, Gortner and First Pentecostal Church began regular radio broadcasts on WKJC (located in the Kirk Johnson Company building). Initially, a morning or evening service aired twice a month. Later, the church sponsored a live music program called "The Gospel Melody Hour" which could be heard every other Sunday night at 9:30. Apparently the community reacted positively to these broadcasts "as evidenced by a great number of responses through the mail and over the telephone."[49] The radio programming continued until early 1930 when it became cost prohibitive. Gortner's ministry at First Pentecostal lasted almost four years to the day. In October 1930 he stepped down to accept a pastorate in Miami, Florida.[50] The church had grown under the leadership of four pastors and in three different locations, each larger than the last, during the 1920s. The decade had ended, as it had begun, amidst growth and change.

The 1930s, however, brought the bleak horizon of economic depression for the community, but for the church the new decade brought the stability of a new shepherd and popularity unequaled in the congregation's previous sixteen years. The Rev. Walter I. Palmer had been pastoring the Pentecostal Tabernacle of Buffalo, NY, when he accepted "the call" to come to Lancaster. His ministry began on the first Sunday of November 1930.[51]

Raised as a Methodist Episcopal in Boston, Palmer rejected Christianity as a young man in favor of secularism and the theory of evolution but experienced a conversion after graduating from college. He returned to school and became convinced of the validity of Spirit Baptism and speaking in tongues. Upon graduation from seminary the Methodist Episcopal church offered Palmer a pastorate which he declined preferring to join the General Council of the Assemblies of God.[52]

With unrelenting energy and enthusiasm Palmer wasted no time in proselytizing Lancaster. He immediately began a revival "marked by increasing attendance and deepening interest." Palmer restarted the regular radio broadcasts that had been discontinued under Vernon Gortner. Portions of the revival meetings mentioned above were aired on WGAL.[53] "The Gospel Melody Hour" also returned to WKJC's weekly schedule.[54]

Palmer's aggressive evangelistic style and efforts had not been in vain. On December 13, a local newspaper reported that because the church was so "crowded on Sunday evenings, seats are to be reserved."[55] While the church membership rolls showed slow steady growth, First Pentecostal's Sunday evening "evangelistic service" experienced phenomenal attendance. Anna Mary Paglia, the eldest child of First Pentecostal charter members Ed and Betty Armstrong, offered the following explanation. Pentecostal practice and theology presented Lancaster Christians with an alternative to their drier and more ritualistic churches. People were attracted to the "freedom of worship" and excitement of the new movement. Many, while unprepared to abandon those parishes in which they were members, could attend a Sunday night meeting because their home churches did not hold a service at that time of the day.[56]

During 1931 Palmer established the pattern that he would repeatedly use throughout his years of ministry at Lancaster: his own style of exegesis with emphasis on the Holy Spirit and foreign missions, the importation of special speakers in periodic revivals, and expanded exploitation of local radio stations. By midsummer Palmer's ministry, as well as those of other Pentecostal pastors in southcentral Pennsylvania, had been so successful that a joint water baptismal service was held. Churches from Columbia, Coatesville, Oxford, Nickel Mine Hill, Kinzer, York, Harrisburg, and Lebanon were represented.[57] Described as "the largest service of its kind held here in recent years," over seventy-five new believers were immersed in the Little Conestoga Creek near the Marietta Pike while two thousand others looked on with "religious fervor." Parked automobiles lined the roadside for a half mile in both directions. "Spectators also filled a nearby trolley bridge causing passing trolleys to stop and wait until the tracks could be cleared."[58] Made exceptional by the size of crowd, the baptismal service was unprecedented because it was broadcast live over WKJC. Palmer later wrote that "reports came from eighty miles away that the water could be heard splashing when the candidates were immersed."[59]

Of the churches mentioned above, all but Harrisburg and Lebanon had come into existence through assistance from First Pentecostal church of Lancaster. Dorothy Brosey, whose parents were early members of First Pentecostal, recalled that small Pentecostal prayer groups would start up "on their own" and then turn to Lancaster for help and leadership. Many of the early pastors of these "pioneer" churches were originally members of the Lancaster congregation.[60]

The radio ministry which included "The Gospel Melody Hour," its replacement, "An Old Fashioned Cottage Prayer Meeting," as well as the "Pentecostal Echoes," gained almost immediate acceptance. In the first two years alone the church received "thousands of letters . . . as many as 1,860 letters in a month from about 300 post offices." Palmer's keen insight into the average radio listener built his near-overnight success. He understood that his audience consisted of individuals rather than large crowds. Also, he wanted to prevent his programs from becoming "little more than a form of entertainment, there would have to be something that would speak to the hearts of the people." Palmer's creative approach did reach the people. Before it had become common within religious circles, he abandoned the preaching format used by other radio ministers and addressed his listeners "in a natural and personal, but earnest" conversational manner through "heart to heart talks."[61] This innovative technique predated Franklin D. Roosevelt's "fireside chats" which did not begin until the spring of 1933. By 1933, Palmer had been broadcasting for over two years.

The spring of 1932 exploded with revival. Like his predecessor Vernon Gortner, Palmer possessed the fortitude to bring in controversial guest speakers if they fit his purposes. In late April Lancaster was introduced to the thirteen-year-old evangelist Mary Louise Paige. The local press described the "little girl preacher" as "an unspoiled American girl who has a message that always attracts great crowds wherever she goes." Though accompanied by her mother, Paige acted as her own manager keeping her itinerary "very simple and natural."[62]

By mid-May, Paige and Palmer were being criticized in the local newspapers for allowing a child "to occupy a pulpit and attract crowds largely out of curiosity." Some Lancasterian clergy believed Paige to be the mouthpiece of manipulative adults.[63] But earlier in Paige's revival, the press had been more accommodating. In late April a *Lancaster New Era* reporter observed that the young girl's "message had the ring in it that attested to its being something born of conviction rather than a studied method."[64]

The revival proved to be successful in terms of the nightly attendance and the number of those converted. But such success was not joyously received by all. On May 14th, a scathing editorial appeared in the pages of the *Lancaster New Era.* In response to a reader's question concerning child-preachers and emotionalism in the church, Rev. John W. Mulder, of St. John's Episcopal Church, wrote "in all Christian charity" that neither children in the pulpit nor excessive emotion in the pews were proper within Protestantism. Mulder argued that a child could not have a "sufficient educational background" in theology, or a "sufficient amount of spiritual experience to teach others." Therefore, Miss Paige had become the "puppet . . . of some maturer mind." "Our Blessed Lord," Mulder added, "had not begun his ministry until he was thirty years old." Regarding emotionalism, the Episcopal rector termed such practice as "maudlin sentiment." In other words, he accused the Pentecostals of drunken behavior "which often works more harm than good."[65] Ironically, this had been the same criticism hurled at the early Christians in Acts, chapter 2. Two days later Palmer offered a rebut to Mulder's charges. Paige was not under any manipulative influence from any older person. The girl, Palmer stated, prepared her own sermons and spoke extemporaneously from "very few notes."[66]

The dispute only added to the curiosity and attracted even larger crowds. Approximately ten thousand people flooded into Maple Grove Park to witness Palmer and Paige baptize forty-six new converts. The park facilities were overrun. Automobiles were barred from the area. Special trolley service to the park "proved inadequate" so hundreds of people walked from their homes in the city to hear thirteen-year-old Mary Louise Paige's final sermon in her Lancaster revival.[67]

Between 1932 and 1934 Palmer erected a tent in which to hold summer revivals. Dubbed the "Kanvas Kathedral," this temporary structure could seat nearly two thousand people.[68] Anna Mary Paglia partially explained the positive and negative aspects of tent and "open air" meetings. A tent was not a church building, thus it offered some appeal to those who might never step through a parish vestibule. Secondly, tents were mobile. If people would not come to where the church was, then the church could go to where the people were. Additionally, tents tended to be without walls, except during inclement weather, so passersby were within earshot of hearing the speakers or musicians. Finally, tent meetings were held on private property because religious gatherings were not allowed on city land. The contrary was true concerning county land. Paglia described open-air services conducted on the steps of the county courthouse. Incorporating congregational singing, testimonies, and sermonettes, participants attempted to share the gospel with pedestrians walking along the city's sidewalks while they remained on the county's only landholding within the city limits.[69]

Palmer invited a variety of guest speakers over that three-year period (1932-34) to minister under the tent. First, in the summer of 1932, First Pentecostal Church welcomed Emma Taylor. Taylor, a former nun, rejected Catholicism upon her conversion to Pentecostal Christianity.[70] The tent's pulpit was filled by evangelist Wilfred A. Brown during the following summer of 1933.[71] And Jack Saunders, a boxer turned preacher, occupied the tent in 1934.[72] While each of these efforts was successful— over a thousand people attended Brown's meetings in 1933 —none had captured Lancaster's attention or imagination as the Paige revival had done.

Less than three years after the final "Kanvas Kathedral" and only seven years after taking the reins of First Pentecostal Church, Palmer's ministry in Lancaster abruptly ended. On Thursday night, February 11, 1937, Walter Palmer died in the Lancaster General Hospital. Officially, cerebral meningitis caused the death of the thirty-seven-year-old minister,[73] but church members believed differently. Folklore in the congregation said that Palmer "died of a broken heart."[74] Compelled by his desire to see all the lost come to Christ, Palmer's soul was crushed beneath the burden when evangelistic results did not meet his expectations. Though this was rumor, it revealed much about the man and how he was perceived. In fact, he did employ any method or tool within his grasp to share his beliefs and experiences with others. Whether by female or child preachers, in a society that still reserved certain positions for men, or through innovative uses of radio, Palmer wanted to reach the masses with the message that had revolutionized his own life. With that image fresh in their minds, Palmer's parishioners and fellow ministers mourned his passing on

Monday, February 15, 1937. The following day memorial services were held at the Glad Tidings Tabernacle in New York City. He was buried in the Flushing Long Island Cemetery.[75]

Though Walter I. Palmer died prematurely, Pentecostalism in Lancaster County did not. The movement continued unabated. The factors of historical significance, reviewed earlier, apply to the Lancaster model as well. From one church which began in 1914, Pentecostalism and the subsequent Charismatic Renewal movement (or neo-Pentecostalism) has flourished. By 1990 nearly thirty churches, with over 6,400 adherents, had been established throughout Lancaster County. Over one-third of these churches were Assembly of God congregations. However, over half of all Lancaster County Pentecostals attended nondenominational Charismatic churches. Additionally, most of these groups do not trace their roots back to First Pentecostal Church though some of their members are descendants of early members of the original congregation.[76]

Secondly, Pentecostalism has evolved. Originally, the movement held some appeal to socially disenfranchised groups such as the inner-city poor, women, and racial minorities. Since the late 1940s, however, as Classical Pentecostals shared in the nation's postwar economic prosperity, the movement relocated to the suburbs with the rest of America. Pentecostals began to exhibit middle-class attitudes and lifestyles. This was true in Lancaster as well. Only three of the county's Assemby of God churches are within the city limits. The county's largest nondenominational Pentecostal church, the Worship Center, was built several miles outside of the Lancaster in Leola. However, the city was not completely abandoned. Charismatic congregations such as the Lord's House of Prayer and ACTS Covenant Fellowship were established in Lancaster with reaching the inner city populace as one of their goals.[77]

Lancaster Pentecostalism has changed in regard to women and racial minorities over the past six decades as well. While the idea and practice of female church pastors such as Gladys Buchwalter and Dorothy Brosey (see endnote #60) was eventually rejected, women were still encouraged to pursue careers as foreign missionaries. Nationally known charismatic evangelists such as Pittsburgh-based Kathryn Kuhlman and Assemblies of God southerner Marilyn Hickey readily received acceptance in Lancaster.[78] Female leadership of parachurch organizations such as Ann Pierson's House of His Creation, Inc., and Loving and Caring, Inc., a ministry to unwed pregnant teenage women, was openly welcomed. Originally, Lancaster Pentecostalism, while incorporating the city's poor, was primarily Caucasian. However, by 1970, the Assemblies of God had begun a congregation in the city's Hispanic community. The Lord's House of Prayer and ACTS Covenant Fellowship, mentioned above, also have Hispanic members. Additionally, the Church of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost was established by the county's only black Pentecostal pastor.

Finally, Lancaster Pentecostalism has presented the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit to Christian groups that were previously unaware of his existence. Two Pentecostal Mennonite congregations, ACTS Covenant Fellowship (Lancaster) and Hopewell Mennonite Church (Elverson) have begun in the region. The Worship Center, DOVE Christian Fellowship, and others have made inroads into the area's Mennonite, Brethren and even Amish communities. And some churches even left their original denominations to embrace neo-Pentecostalism. Hosanna Christian Fellowship (originally Lititz Baptist Church) left the Southern Baptist Convention after its pastor and leadership were Spirit-baptized in the mid-1980s.

Though the county's history was not radically transfigured by the presence of Pentecostalism, many individual family histories were irrevocably altered. More important, Lancaster's experience provided a prime example of how Pentecostalism entered and organized itself within a local community.

Endnotes

1. A more thorough account of Pentecostalism's origins in Lancaster County appears in K. Daniel Armstrong's "Pentecost at Lancaster, the First Thirty Years: 1907 - 1937," (M.A. Thesis, Millersville University of Pennsylvania, 1991).

2. Parham's life and ministry is chronicled in James A. Goff Jr.'s *Fields White onto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988).

3. For more information concerning the Keswick Higher Life Movement, see Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee, eds., *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements (DPCM)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), "Keswick Higher Life Movement," by David D. Bundy, 518-519.

4. Goff, 62-71.

5. Ibid., 71-105.

6. Ibid., 106-127. For more information concerning W.J. Seymour, see *DPCM,* "Seymour, William Joseph" by H. Vinson Synan, 778-781.

7. A detailed account of the Azusa Street revival was provided by Frank Bartleman in *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles - As It Was in the Beginning* (Los Angeles: By the author, 1926). Also see Bennett F. Lawrence, *The Apostolic Faith Restored* (St. Louis, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1916), Alexander A. Boddy, *Confidence* (Sunderland, England) 24 (May 1912), and *DPCM,* "Azusa Street Revival," by Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., 31-36.

8. *DPCM,* "Classical Pentecostalism," by H. Vernon Synan, 219-222, "Missiology," by L. Grant McClung, Jr., 607-609, "Overseas Missions," by Gary B. McGee, 610-625, and "Pentecostal Perspectives on Eschatology," by Dwight J. Wilson, 264-268.

9. *DPCM,* "Baptism in the Holy Spirit," by J. Rodman Williams, 40-41.

10. Ibid., 42-43.

11. *DPCM,* "Initial Evidence, a Biblical Perspective," by Ben C. Aker, 455-460.

12. *DPCM,* "Glossolalia," by Russell P. Spittler, 335.

13. Goff, 15-16, 64, 72-75, 133, 180, 199, and 221.

14. *DPCM,* "Baptism of the Holy Spirit," by J. Rodman Williams, 44.

15. *DPCM,* "Global Statistics," by David Barrett, 810-817.

16. *DPCM,* "Pentecostal Perspectives on Eschatology," by Dwight J. Wilson, 264.

17. *DPCM,* "Global Statistics," by David B. Barrett, 810-817.

18. Robert M. Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

19. Israel S. Clare, *Lancaster and its People: An Account of Lancaster, PA, its Past and Present* (Lancaster, PA: D.S. Stauffer, 1892), 68-70.

20. Clare, 72, 122-126, and John Ward Willson Loose, *The Heritage of Lancaster* (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, 1978), 90, 129.

21. Clare, 52, 118, and Loose, 143-144.

22. Loose, 124-126, and Peter J. Betts, "A History of the Lancaster Law and Order Society," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society,* 69 (1969): 216.

23. Loose, 126.

24. The Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) was formed in 1897 through the amalgamation of two Holiness groups, the Christian Alliance and the Evangelical Missionary Alliance. For more information see *DPCM,* "Christian and Missionary Alliance," by Charles Nienkirchen, 163.

25. Anderson, 73.

26. "Alliance Workers Gather: Missionary Convention at Rocky Springs," *The New Era (TNE),* 13 July 1907, 2, and "Missionary Workers Speak," *TNE,* 16 July 1907, 2.

27. Stanley H. Frodsham, *With Signs Following: The Story of the Latter-Day Pentecostal Revival* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1926), 47.

28. Frodsham, 47, 49-50, and Carl Brumback, *Suddenly . . . from Heaven: A History of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), 90-91.

29. John Thomas Nichol, *Pentecostalism: The Story of the Growth and Development of a Vital New Force in American Protestantism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 38-39.

30. Gladys Buchwalter, interview by author, 11 February 1991, Millersville, PA, tape recording.

31. Ibid.

32. For more information concerning the origins of the Assemblies of God, see *DPCM,* "Assemblies of God," by Edith L. Blumhofer, 23-28.

33. Ada Buchwalter, who had been a member of the delegation sent to the AG General Council, later married Leonard Bolton. Together they served as missionaries in China for several decades. See G. Virgil Stewart, Reuben Buchwalter, and Edward Armstrong, *Thirty-Fifth Anniversary and Home Coming* (Lancaster, PA: Privately printed, 1949), 13.

34. Stewart, 3.

35. Ibid, 3-4.

36. *1985 Dictionary of First Assembly of God* (Lancaster, PA: Privately printed, 1985), 6.

37. Stewart, 4.

38. "Camp Meeting Held at Williamson Park," *Lancaster Daily Intelligencer Journal (LDIJ),* 18 August 1923, 5.

39. "Williamson Park Camp Will Close Sunday," *LDIJ,* 9 August 1924, 5, and "Lancaster Swelters as Old Sol and High Humidity Combine to Send Mercury Soaring Upward," *Lancaster New Era (LNE),* 7 August 1924, 1.

40. "Williamson Park Campmeeting," *LDIJ,* 2 August 1924, 5, and "Hundreds at Services in Williamson Park," 4 August 1924, 11.

41. Stewart, 4.

42. "Pentecostal Church Prepares to Occupy New Building in April," *LDIJ*, 9 March 1927, 9.

43. "Pentecostal Church to Be Dedicated," *LDIJ*, 13 April 1927, 9, and "Will Dedicate Church Sunday," *LNE*, 13 April 1927, 3.

44. "Aimee McPherson Here Four Days," *LNE*, 5 February 1927, 3.

45. "Widely-Known Woman Evangelist Sees More Work for Churches," *LDIJ*, 11 February 1927, 1-2. Also see *DPCM*, "McPherson, Aimee Semple," by Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., 570.

46. "Mrs. McPherson Sees Revival of Religion," *LNE*, 11 February 1927, 1-2.

47. "Mrs. McPherson Sways Immense Audience Here," *LNE*, 12 February 1927, 1, 3.

48. "'Devils Plotted Against Me,' Declared Evangelist Telling Story of Career," *Lancaster Sunday News (LSN)*, 13 February 1927, 1, 5.

49. Walter I. Palmer, *From Jazz to Hallelujah* (Lancaster, PA: Privately printed, 1933), 27.

50. Stewart, 5.

51. Stewart, 5, and Palmer, 27.

52. Palmer, 3-8, 10-15.

53. "Pentecostal Pastor to Continue Services," *LDIJ*, 15 November 1930, 10, and "Continue Services at Tabernacle," *LNE*, 15 November 1930, 9.

54. "Walter I. Palmer Will Inaugurate Sermon Series," *LDIJ*, 6 December 1930, 7, and "Pastor Announces Sermon Series," *LNE*, 6 December 1930, 14.

55. "Pentecostal Church Will Reserve Seats," *LDIJ*, 13 December 1930, 7.

56. Anna Mary Paglia, interview by author, 1 February 1991, Mount Joy, PA, tape recording. Mrs. Paglia's husband, Dominic, was the church's first associate (and youth) pastor, serving from 1949-51.

57. "Joint Baptisms by Pentecostal," *LDIJ*, 11 July 1931, 7.

58. "75 Immersed Here as 2,000 Line Creek," *LSN*, 12 July 1931, 1.

59. Palmer, 31.

60. Dorothy Brosey, interview by author, 11 February 1991, Millersville, PA, tape recording. Brosey and Gladys Buchwalter co-pastored a small church in Windsor. York County, in the late 1940s. See Stewart, 11.

61. Palmer, 27-29.

62. "Tabernacle Plans Special Services," *LDIJ*, 23 April 1932, 7, and "Girl Preacher Arrives Today," *LNE*, 23 April 1932, 12.

63. John W. Mulder, "From the Steeple," *LNE*, 14 May 1932, 7.

64. "Revival Services Largely Attended," *LNE*, 26 April 1932, 12.

65. Mulder, 7.

66. "Revival Services Begin Final Week," *LNE*, 16 May 1932, 14.

67. "Huge Crowds See Baptism," *LNE*, 23 May 1932, 14.

68. "Tabernacle Plans Tent Meetings," *LDIJ*, 13 August 1932, 12, "Tent Meetings Open Tuesday," *LNE*, 13 August 1932, 12, "Canvas Cathedral Closes on Monday," *LDIJ*, 22 July 1933, 12, "Converted Pugilist Will Speak at Tent," *LDIJ*, 23 August 1934, 16, and "Tent Services Continue," *LDIJ*, 27 August 1934, 14.

69. Anna Mary Paglia, interview by author, 1 February 1991, Mount Joy, PA, tape recording.

70. "Revival Opens, *LNE*, 17 August 1932, 4, "Many Attend Service at Kanvas Kathedral," *LDIJ*. 17 August 1932, 12, and "Kanvas Kathedral Services to Close," *LDIJ*, 5 September 1932, 5.

71. "Canvas Cathedral Closes on Monday," *LDIJ,* 22 July 1933, 12.

72. "Converted Pugilist Will Speak at Tent," *LDIJ,* 23 August 1934, 16, "Speaks on Conversion," *LDIJ,* 25 August 1934, 14, and "'Hosea' Sermon Topic of Rev. Jack Saunders," *LDIJ,* 28 August 1934, 16.

73. "Rev. Walter I Palmer: Pastor of Pentecostal Tabernacle Succumbs in Hospital of Cerebral Meningitis," *LDIJ,* 12 February 1937, 2.

74. Anna Mary Paglia, interview by author, 1 February 1991, Mount Joy, PA, tape recording.

75. "Services Monday for Rev. Palmer," *LDIJ,* 13 February 1937, 2.

76. Armstrong, 107-110.

77. The author compiled this information after years of informal association with local Pentecostal groups.

78. *DPCM,* "Kuhlman, Kathryn" by Dwight J. Wilson, 529-530, and *DPCM,* "Hickey, Marilyn Sweitzer" by Stephen Strang, 389.

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