


Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies



International Conference on
Pentecostal Mission
Feb 2003, Baguio, Philippines

Volume 8, Number 1 (January 2005)

THE WORLD OF R. M. EVANS

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1. Introduction

Robert Milton Evans had the privilege of living during changing times in two centuries. His life began in the middle of the nineteenth century and bridged over into the twentieth. Evans was born in 1847 in DeKalb, Mississippi, USA and grew up in the rural farm community of Live Oak, in the north-central area of Florida. Evans was 25 years old when he entered the pastoral ministry of the Southern Methodist Church in 1872.

After coming out of retirement at the age of 63, Evans and his missionary party set sail for Nassau on December 31, 1909, and within five days, they landed in the Bahamas on January 4, 1910.¹ Evans was the first cross-cultural missionary for the Church of God (Cleveland, TN, USA). The Church of God began as the Christian Union, near the North Carolina-Tennessee border.

If one could stand in Evans' shoes and look around at the religious world in the year 1910, he or she would find that a strategic International Missionary Conference (of all Protestants) was held in Edinburgh, Scotland, and that over 185 Pentecostals had joined the evangelical missionary force. It was the year for the first Pentecostal missionaries from England, Norway and Sweden; it was the year in which Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vingren's Spirit-led trip from Chicago sparked the flame of Pentecost in Brazil; and it was also the year when Willis C. Hoover founded the Methodist Pentecostal Church in Chile. The impact of what God began that year is still with us today.

The year 1910 also brought other changes in various parts of the world that would have implications on into the last decade of the

¹ James E. Cossey, *R. M. Evans: The First of His Kind* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, n.d.).

twentieth century. In fact, the second decade of the twentieth century included three significant revolutions which affected world history—and the missionary spread of the gospel—in the 1900s. These were the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the Chinese Revolution of 1911 led by Sun Yat-sen against the Manchu Dynasty, and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 led by Vladimir Lenin against the Romanov Monarchy.²

Within one lifetime, R. M. Evans lived through a devastating civil war, saw his country emerge as a world power and was contemporary to the three national revolutions that would have regional and world influence in the twentieth century. Just a decade prior to his death on October 12, 1924, he was affected, along with the rest of the entire world, by the first of two global wars in the last century.

It was during this time (1914-1929) that the Church of God was building upon the heroic self-sacrifice of R. M. Evans in the international expansion of its Pentecostal message. In 1914, Lucy M. Leatherman was sent to Egypt and Palestine and in 1916 to Argentina; in 1914 the Rushins to China, with contacts in the Philippines in 1918; in 1917 F. L. Ryder to Argentina via strategic stops in the West Indies; in 1914 the fund raising plan for a general assembly missions was initiated with F. J. Lee as general missions treasurer; in 1916-17, vigorous promotion of missions was made by L. Howard Juillerat, an articulate speaker/writer for the missions cause at two successive general assemblies; in 1921 J. H. Ingram made a pilot voyage to Hamilton, Bermuda; in 1926 a missions board was established with R. P. Johnson as chairman; and in 1929 J. H. Ingram made the first of several trips into Central and South America.³

However, one hundred years prior to the missionary ministry of R. M. Evans, the God of all nations was quietly and steadily building a missions movement that would come into full bloom within the lifetime of this missionary pioneer. The eminent mission's historian, Kenneth Scott LaTourette, calls the nineteenth century the "Great Century" in the overall two thousand year expansion of the Christian movement.⁴ R. M.

² T. Walter Wallbank, *Civilization: Past and Present*, 3rd ed., (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1962).

³ See the chapter, "Fifty-year Survey of Church of God World Missions," in Charles W. Conn, *Where the Saints Have Trod: A History of Church of God Missions* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway, 1959), pp.11-48. This survey covers the period between 1910 and 1960.

⁴ See the chapter under the title, "The Great Century: Growing Repudiation Paralleled by Bounding Vitality and Unprecedented Expansion, A.D. 1815–A.D.

Evans, the Church of God, and the global advance of the modern Pentecostal/Charismatic movement have roots in the “Great Century” that formed the “world of R. M. Evans.”

2. From the Haystack to the Wagon

One hundred years and great cultural-geographical distance separated R. M. Evans from Samuel J. Mills. Yet Evans had a spiritual heritage from the eventful century between the two men. Evans, born in rural Mississippi and reared in rural Live Oak, Florida, was pastoring in the agrarian settlement of Wildwood Circuit, Florida in 1902.⁵ In 1906 he retired from his ministry in the Methodist Church and in 1910, he and his wife Ida sold their home and livestock in Durant, Florida and set out with a wagon and team of mules on a three-hundred mile land journey to Miami, where he sailed to Nassau.⁶

Exactly one hundred years prior to Evans’ pastorate in the Wildwood Circuit, young Samuel J. Mills was called to preach while following the plow on his farm in Connecticut in 1802. He enrolled in Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts to prepare for the ministry. Mills was a central figure in a group of missionary-minded young men known as the “Society of the Brethren,” who met regularly in a grove of maples near the campus for prayer and discussion. The Great Commission of the church was a central and frequent focus of their prayer meetings. One day, on their way to prayer, they were caught in a sudden thunderstorm and took refuge under a nearby haystack where they had their usual time of prayer for the lost world. Standing to their feet the young men said, “We can do it if we will.” They signed a pledge to become America’s first foreign missionaries and became known as “the Haystack Group.” After graduation Mills and several of the group went on to Andover Seminary where they joined with others (including Adoniram Judson who later sailed for Burma) to form the Society of Inquiry on the Subject of Missions.

It is significant, in light of the power of student involvement in Church of God World Missions (especially after World War II from Lee College), that students and young people were the motivating force

1914,’ in Kenneth Scott LaTourette, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 11, *A.D. 1500-A.D. 1975* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp. 1063-80.

⁵ Cossey, *R.M. Evans*, p. 15.

⁶ Conn, *Where the Saints Have Trod*, p. 50.

behind the first organized mission society in America—long before the days of denominational mission boards. And, out of the dedication of these young seminary students, the first interdenominational missions society in America was formed. It was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which held its first organizational meeting in September, 1810. One hundred years later, Evans began his work in the Bahamas.

Responding to this opportunity and building upon the imperial trade routes across international colonial empires, the Protestant churches of Europe advanced the gospel to make Christianity a truly universal faith for the first time in its history.⁷ The nineteenth century was a “Protestant era,” says mission historian Ruth A. Tucker, “...and more specifically an era dominated by evangelical Protestantism.”⁸

The philosophies of French Rationalism (in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) and the power of the French Revolution had effectively cut the purse strings of Roman Catholic missions. In Latin America, in particular, Roman Catholicism was witnessing many reverses.⁹ At the same time non-Christian religions were experiencing a decline. “Hinduism, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism were relatively quiescent in the nineteenth century,” says University of Chicago historian Martin Marty, and “... Christians sensed that they could fill a vacuum.”¹⁰

In America, church membership increased from ten to forty percent during the century. Denominations were springing into existence and the Sunday school movement was rapidly growing, both in the U.S. and in Great Britain. The eighteenth century revivals that began in England with Whitefield and Wesley brought a great surge among Christian leaders and laity in spreading the gospel worldwide. Large sums of money coming into Britain through international trade were channeled into Christian causes.¹¹

Beginning with William Carey and the Baptist Missionary Society (1792), dozens of new mission agencies were founded throughout the

⁷ Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (New York: Penguin, 1964), p. 243.

⁸ Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Java: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), p. 110.

⁹ Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Java*, p. 110.

¹⁰ Martin E. Marty, *A Short History of Christianity* (New York: Meridian, 1959), p. 318.

¹¹ Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Java*, pp. 110-11.

century. Stephen Neill says it was “the great age of societies.”¹² It was the century of some of the better known “missionary heroes” in modern missions history: Henry Martyn to India (1806); Robert Morrison to China (1807); Adorinam and Nancy Judson to Burma (1812); David Livingstone to Africa (1841); J. Hudson Taylor to China (1854); Mary Slessor to Africa (1876); “The Cambridge Seven” to China (1885).¹³

There was a great variety of Christian ministries during the century. Christian missionaries, while maintaining their primary goal of preaching the gospel and winning baptized converts, were responsible for giving hundreds of languages a written form, translating the Bible and other Christian literature, and setting up thousands of missionary schools. Orphanages and hospitals were founded; nurses and relief workers were trained; and Christian missionaries were involved in the abolition of Negro slavery, in curbing the sale of opium, in prohibiting the spread of alcohol, in gaining better working conditions and obtaining better housing for urban workers, in fighting for prison reform and insuring better care for the mentally ill. Dozens of colleges and universities were founded by Christians during this time.¹⁴

Seeing the whole world as their field, including the United States, Evangelicals made fast strides forward in reaching out cross-culturally at home during the “Great Century.” Actually, this had already been the practice since colonial times, as outreach to Native Americans (Indians), for example, was as old as the first colonists. In 1628, when Charles I granted a charter to Massachusetts, it was definitely stated that “the principal end of the plantation was the conversion of the Indians.” A similar clause, says Kane, was inserted in the Virginia charter. Interestingly, two hundred years before Evans, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel went on record requesting itinerant preachers from England to missionize the “Six Nations of the Indians.” Almost three hundred years before Evans, “the Pilgrim Fathers had set apart one of their number to promote the conversion of the Indians” when they landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620.¹⁵

It is no wonder, then, with the “home missions” tradition of former denominations (along with outstanding efforts of others such as the

¹² Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, p. 252.

¹³ Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Java*, pp. 186-87.

¹⁴ LaTourette, *A History of Christianity*, pp. 1335-36.

¹⁵ J. Herbert Kane, *A Global View of Christian Missions: From Pentecost to the Present*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1975), p. 95.

Presbyterians and Southern Baptists) that Evans conducted evangelistic missions to the Seminole Indians as he traveled from Durant toward his point of departure in Miami.¹⁶

Surveying various kinds of outreaches in the ethnic diversity of nineteenth century America, Harold Cook also points out that a variety of cross cultural ministries were being offered to Negro slaves, frontiersmen and southern highlanders (Appalachia and the Ozark Mountains), “rural missions,” and the great ethnic cities.¹⁷

Evangelist Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899) was one of the better known nineteenth century contemporaries of Evans. Beyond his holistic ministry to the cities and his extensive international preaching, Moody also contributed to the overseas missionary cause through his efforts to multiply leaders through Bible institute training. The Nyack Missionary College founded in 1882 by another contemporary of Evans, A. B. Simpson (1843-1919) and Moody Bible Institute, founded in 1886 by Moody, were among the first of hundreds of institutes that rapidly multiplied missionary workers through practical instruction, with the Bible as the chief textbook. The growth of the independent “faith mission movement” (which dates its origin to 1865 when J. Hudson Taylor founded the China Inland Mission) was greatly enhanced by the sister “Bible institute movement.” A high proportion of candidates for these non-denominational mission societies founded in the great century were trained in Bible institutes,¹⁸ a method later adopted by Pentecostal missionaries.

Moody is also to be appreciated for his part in founding the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) for Foreign Missions (interestingly in the same year as the founding of the Church of God). In August, 1886, Moody held a summer Bible conference for college young people from across the country at Mount Hermon, Massachusetts. Many students came with a deep burden for missions. By the end of the conference, more than 100 young people had volunteered for missionary service. The result was the birth of the SVM with its well-publicized motto: “The Evangelization of the World in this Generation.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Cossey, *R.M. Evans*, pp. 17-18.

¹⁷ Harold R. Cook, *Highlights of Christian Missions: A History and Survey* (Chicago: Moody, 1967), pp. 91-130.

¹⁸ Cook, *Highlights of Christian Missions*, pp. 66-67.

¹⁹ Cook, *Highlights of Christian Missions*, p. 68.

One of the early student leaders was John R. Mott who, later in life as a Methodist layman, would chair the proceedings of the very strategic International Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910—the year of Evan’s missionary trek. The SVM prospered for some 50 years and was instrumental in sending 20,500 students to the foreign mission field, mostly from North America. “During the early twentieth century,” says Ruth Tucker, “it is estimated that student volunteers constituted half of the total Protestant foreign missionary force,” with a strong preference for the countries of China and India.²⁰

While Moody was calling for at least one hundred volunteers in Massachusetts, an inconspicuous and non-publicized meeting was being held hundred of miles to the south at the Barney Creek Meeting house in Monroe County, Tennessee on Thursday, August 19, 1886.²¹ Though the eight original volunteers (five of them women) for the Christian Union were much like the small streams which converged near them (Barney and Coker Creeks), in time their spiritual successors in the Church of God would flow into a mighty worldwide Pentecostal river of blessing, eventually surpassing the peak strength of the SVM, which later declined and faded due to theological liberalism in the 1920s.

The seeds of theological liberalism, that questioned the missionary cause, had been sown in the nineteenth century. In fact, the “Great Century” that saw unprecedented expansion also produced some of the most ominous threats to the missions cause. This was also responsible, in part, for the pietistic longings that gave rise to the Holiness movement and the resulting Pentecostal revival. While the “Great Century” produced its Livingstones, Judsons, and Taylors, it also gave birth to notorious enemies of the gospel (most of them with Christian backgrounds, many from the homes of clergymen!): Karl Marx (1818-1883), Charles Robert Darwin (1809-1882), Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900), Auguste Comte (1798-1857), Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), Robert Green Ingersoll (1833-1899), Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and John Dewey (1859-1952).²² The impact of their philosophies posed a threat toward the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.

The prevailing expectation of most Protestant missionaries in the 1800s, however, reflected the overall optimism of the century. Most

²⁰ Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, p. 261.

²¹ Charles W. Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, rev. ed. (Cleveland, TN: Pathway, 1977), pp. 7-8.

²² LaTourette, *A History of Christianity*, pp. 1066-74.

missionaries held a postmillennial view of history, believing that the preaching of the gospel, coupled with their humanitarian efforts in establishing human institutions (schools, orphanages, hospitals, etc.) would eventually usher in the kingdom of God on earth.²³ After all, their missionary activities abroad were practically unhindered under the protective cover of western colonialism. In addition, the last twenty years of the nineteenth century (from 1880-1900) produced an era in which there was a tremendous increase in wealth in the U.S. In fact, the 1890s were called the “Gay 90s.” This, says church historian William W. Sweet, was “the most significant single influence on organized religion in the U.S.” during those years.²⁴

The great popular churches, in which the leadership of men like R. M. Evans was produced, had achieved phenomenal success. The Methodists, for example, were but a small percentage of the religious scene in colonial America when the nation was formed. However, due to their aggressive evangelism, gifts theology (to every man and woman a ministry), and superior organizational abilities, the Methodists moved with the pioneering young nation toward the frontier. By 1850, it had become America’s largest and fastest-growing religious movement, with more than 1.2 million members. Churches like Evan’s Methodist denomination were proud to be known as “poor men’s churches,” but “were rapidly being transformed into churches of the upper middle class.”²⁵

Sweet maintains that the great denominations came to be controlled more and more by business methods and were dominated by people of wealth. Church services leaned towards formality, and the common people of limited means began to feel more and more out of place, complaining that “heart religion” was disappearing. In addition there was a growing tendency in mainstream religion to accept more liberal and modernistic views (including a subtle “social Darwinism”) that

²³ Gary B. McGee, “Missions, Overseas (North American),” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 610-11.

²⁴ See Chapter 21, “The Church and the Changing Economic Order,” in William W. Sweet, *The Story of Religion in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1930), p. 345. See also the amazing socio-economic roots and linkages of the Holiness-Pentecostal movements in a well-documented work by Mickey Crews, *The Church of God: A Social History* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1990).

²⁵ Sweet, *The Story of Religion in America*, p. 345.

questioned the theological mainstays of the evangelical Protestant missionary enterprise.²⁶

With these developments firmly entrenched in the mainline church, seekers of a deeper walk and the “higher life” began to congregate in Holiness retreats, such as the Pleasant Grove campground near Durant, Florida, where R. M. Evans and his wife Ida first came into contact with the Pentecostal experience and eventually with the Church of God.²⁷ Here, they were introduced to a spiritual family that extended north of Cleveland, Tennessee, west to Los Angeles, California, and beyond to the wider world of Pentecostalism.

3. The Azusa Street Lineage

What was the real power and significance of the “Azusa Street Revival” in Los Angeles, California from 1906-1913? Certainly the old building at Azusa Street, a forty-by-sixty-foot white-washed wood frame structure could not compare with the magnificent cathedrals of Europe and America in architectural beauty. And, the Azusa Street revival, with its accompanying supernatural signs, was certainly not the first of its kind at that point in Christian history. Agnes Ozman had spoken in tongues on New Year’s Day (January 1, 1901) at Charles Parham’s Bible school in Topeka, Kansas and there had been supernatural signs and wonders at the 1896 Shearer Schoolhouse revival in Cherokee County, North Carolina. Scores of Pentecostal outpourings, many beyond the shores of the U.S., were being experienced at the turn of the century. In fact, Church of God historian Charles W. Conn notes a number of instances in the two thousand-year history of Christianity in which God’s people experienced spiritual blessings similar to Pentecostal manifestations prior to 1896.²⁸

The major contribution of the revival at Azusa Street—called the “American Jerusalem”²⁹—was that through it Pentecostalism was becoming an international missionary movement, and the global significance of Azusa Street cannot be overestimated. Strong missionary churches, influential evangelists, new missions societies and entire

²⁶ Sweet, *The Story of Religion in America*, p. 352.

²⁷ Conn, *Where the Saints Have Trod*, p. 49.

²⁸ Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, pp. 23-25.

²⁹ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 95.

denominations trace their spiritual heritage back through the Azusa Street lineage. The network of people who came and went from this revival spread around the world through committed evangelists such as Robert and Ida Evans.³⁰ The Evans' "personal Pentecost" came through a series of people connected to the Azusa Street revival.

Like Evans, G. B. Cashwell (1862-1916) was a former Methodist minister, who left his church to join the Holiness Church of North Carolina (later known as the Pentecostal Holiness Church). Hearing of the Azusa Street revival, Cashwell traveled in November, 1906 to Los Angeles where he received the Pentecostal experience. Cashwell returned to Dunn, North Carolina where he began meetings on December 31, 1906 that lasted through the month of January, 1907. Among the many ministers of the Holiness churches in the area who were baptized in the Holy Spirit at that time was a young man by the name of F. M. Britton (1870-1937), who would later have a direct connection to the Evans through the Azusa Street lineage.³¹

A year after Cashwell's revival in Dunn, he was invited by A. J. Tomlinson to preach at the third general assembly of the Church of God where, on Sunday morning, January 12, 1908, Tomlinson received the Pentecostal blessing during Cashwell's message.³² By the time Cashwell was preaching in Cleveland (January, 1908) one of his "Pentecostal converts," Britton, had already preached the full gospel at a meeting destined to be the crossroads experience for R. M. and Ida Evans:

In June and July, 1907, at the Pleasant Grove Campground, two miles from Durant, a preacher named F. M. Britton, of North Carolina, preached about the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and about seventy persons received this spiritual blessing. The Evans were among the seventy.³³

Two years later, the Evans joined the Church of God when A. J. Tomlinson and T. L. McLain visited the campground, arriving on May

³⁰ C. M. Robeck, Jr., "Azusa Street Revival," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, pp. 31-36.

³¹ See the following entries in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*: Vinson Synan, "Gaston Barnabas Cashwell," pp. 109-110 and Charles W. Conn, "Francis Marion Britton," p. 99.

³² A. J. Tomlinson, *Answering the Call of God* (Cleveland, TN; White Wing, n.d.), pp. 9-10.

³³ Conn, *Where the Saints Have Trod*, p. 49.

21, 1909.³⁴ Another ministry couple, A. G. and Lillian Garr from Los Angeles, had already started their new Pentecostal ministry overseas a few months before the Pleasant Grove revival with Britton. Writing from Calcutta, India, Lillian Garr excitedly reported that:

God is spreading Pentecost here in Calcutta, and thirteen or fourteen missionaries and other workers have received it.... We are among Bible teachers, and they have the Word so stored away; but now the Spirit is putting life and power into it, which is wonderful to behold.³⁵

She also reported, says Pentecostal archivist Wayne Warner, that Miss Susan Easton, head of the American Women's Board of Missions, had been baptized in the Spirit and "is power for God."³⁶

Garr's reports came in the April, 1907 issue of *The Apostolic Faith*, the magazine published by William J. Seymour from the Azusa Street Mission, a periodical responsible for igniting scores of Pentecostal fires in all parts of the world. The Garrs were among the first of the Pentecostal overseas emissaries from Azusa Street. Some would say that they were "the first foreign missionaries of the Pentecostal movement."³⁷

What Lillian Garr observed as "something wonderful to behold" in Calcutta and what Robert and Ida Evans were experiencing on the other side of the world in south Florida was spreading like wildfire. McGee says, "Pentecostal missionaries went everywhere preaching the gospel," and by 1910, Evans was a part of over 185 Pentecostals who had traveled overseas from North America to engage in missionary evangelism.³⁸ Coming out of the heritage of the faith missions movement in the "Great Century," many Pentecostals hastily went out on their own initiative, expecting the soon return of the Lord. Others would form mission societies that eventually consolidated into denominations, and some, like

³⁴ A. J. Tomlinson, *Journal of Happenings*, 5 vols. (1901-1923, original manuscripts).

³⁵ Lillian Garr, "In Calcutta, India," *The Apostolic Faith*, April, 1907, p. 1.

³⁶ Garr, "In Calcutta, India," p. 1. See also Maynard Ketcham and Wayne Warner, "When the Pentecostal Fire Fell in Calcutta," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 3:3 (Fall 1983), pp. 5-6.

³⁷ Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, pp. 111-12.

³⁸ Gary B. McGee, "The Azusa Street Revival and Twentieth-century Missions," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 12:2 (April 1988), p. 58-61 (59).

Evans, would go at their own expense with membership connections in church organizations.³⁹

In 1910, a number of exciting developments were unfolding internationally in the world of Pentecostal missions concurrent with Evans. Already the Pentecostal Missionary Union (PMU), the first successful Pentecostal missions agency, had been established by Alexander Boddy (the first chairman) and Cecil Polhill (the elected president) in Great Britain. Polhill had already distinguished himself as a veteran missionary, having gone to China twenty years before as one of the now famous "Cambridge Seven." (C. T. Studd was another of that early group of Cambridge athletes who surrendered their lives as missionaries.) Polhill, like Evans, was a part of the Azusa Street lineage, having been baptized in the Spirit on an earlier trip to Los Angeles.⁴⁰

Other European and American Pentecostal societies began to form after the PMU:

The Norwegian Foreign Mission work commenced in 1910, with missionaries proceeding to India, South Africa, and South America. The Swedish Churches followed about the same time, thereby initiating a great missionary movement within their own constituency.⁴¹

With regard to the Scandinavian Pentecostals, Peter Hocken has noted in the late 1980s that "Pentecostals form approximately one-half of all Scandinavian missionaries, with main concentrations in Africa and Brazil."⁴²

According to McGee, the first "missionary manifesto" among independent Pentecostals, calling for the establishment of a missionary society, surfaced in 1908 at the Pentecostal camp meeting in Alliance, Ohio. The meeting was led by Levi R. Lupton, who subsequently formed the Pentecostal Missionary Union in the U.S. In the following year,

³⁹ See Grant McClung, Jr., "Explosion, Motivation, and Consolidation: The Historical Anatomy of a Missionary Movement," in *Azusa Street and Beyond: Pentecostal Missions and Church Growth in the Twentieth Century*, ed. L. Grant McClung, Jr. (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge, 1986), pp. 3-20.

⁴⁰ McClung, "Explosion, Motivation, and Consolidation," p. 16.

⁴¹ L. F. W. Woodford, "Pentecost and Foreign Missions," in *World Pentecostal Conference, 1952*, ed. H. W. Greenway (London: British Pentecostal Fellowship, 1952), pp. 42-43 (43).

⁴² Peter D. Hocken, "European Pentecostalism," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, pp. 268-78 (273).

Pentecostals in the U.S. also formed the South and Central African Pentecostal Mission, and the Congo Evangelistic mission.⁴³

To help “de-Americanize” the international Pentecostal missionary movement, it is significant to note that the Pentecostal Missionary Union in Britain was organized and sending forth board-sponsored missionaries at least a decade prior to the establishment of missions boards and departments by two of the larger North American Pentecostal bodies, the Assemblies of God and the Church of God. The Assemblies of God formalized its Missionary Department in 1919 (five years after its founding)⁴⁴ and the Church of God established a standing Foreign Missions Board in 1926 (forty years after its inception).⁴⁵ The Pentecostal Holiness Church elected a Foreign Missionary Board in 1911.⁴⁶ Other missions contemporaries in the 1910 world of R. M. Evans were Willis C. Hoover, father of the Methodist Pentecostal Church in Chile (1910), and Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vingren, whose Chicago to Brazil trip in 1910 was the spark of Pentecostalism in that country.

The fact that men like Daniel Berg in Chicago and Cecil Polhill in England were laymen illustrates how people from all walks of life were carrying the Pentecostal message in those days. Peter Hocken stresses this in his article on “Cecil H. Polhill—Pentecostal Layman”:

It was central to the spiritual genius of the Pentecostal movement that all participants had an equal Christian dignity. The Holy Spirit was poured out on “all flesh,” not just ordained clerical flesh, not just educated degreed flesh, not just aristocratic propertied flesh. The least educated, the least affluent, those with no social status, all could be equal recipients of the spiritual gifts; all could become instruments of the Lord in word and act. ‘God is no respecter of persons’ is a truth amply demonstrated in early Pentecostal history.⁴⁷

This truth was demonstrated in the interracial cooperation between Evans and his black Bahamian predecessor in missions, Edmund S. Barr.

⁴³ McGee, “The Azusa Street Revival and Twentieth-century Mission,” p. 59.

⁴⁴ William W. Menzies, *Anointed to Serve: The Story of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1971), p. 131.

⁴⁵ Conn, *Where the Saints Have Trod*, p. 25.

⁴⁶ Joseph E. Campbell, *The Pentecostal Holiness Church in 1898-1948* (Franklin Springs, GA: Pentecostal Holiness Church, 1951), p. 347.

⁴⁷ Peter Hocken, “Cecil H. Polhill—Pentecostal Layman,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 10:2 (Fall 1988), pp. 116-40 (137).

It is further illustrated by the contribution of Pentecostal women, such as Ida Evans, a missionary in her own right. Ida Evans (1866-1952), who was nineteen years younger than Robert and in her mid-forties when they sailed for Nassau, had actually felt called to missions early in life. Cossey called her the "Indomitable Mrs. Evans," and places her missionary contribution side-by-side with her husband.⁴⁸ Similar honor also goes to women such as Rebecca Barr (Edmund's wife), who wrote reports from the Bahamas to the *Church of God Evangel*,⁴⁹ and to Flora Bower, a short-term worker from the *Evangel* office in Cleveland, who helped the Evans-Barr effort in the Summer of 1910.⁵⁰

Married women missionaries were the accepted norm in the early 1800s, but the idea of an unmarried woman going overseas was not yet popular. Yet, in the 1820s single women began to trickle overseas. "The first single American woman (not widowed) to serve as a foreign missionary," says Ruth Tucker, "was Betsy Stockton, a black woman and former slave, who went to Hawaii in 1823."⁵¹ During the first decade of the twentieth century, women, *for the first time in history*, outnumbered men in Protestant missions. Missions records from Baptist and Presbyterians working in the Shantung province of China, dated 1910, the year Ida Evans sailed for Nassau, show "seventy-nine women missionaries as compared to forty-six men."⁵²

Tucker also refers to a book, *Western Women in Eastern Lands*, published in 1910 by an outstanding missions promoter, Helen Barrett Montgomery. Montgomery noted:

It is indeed a wonderful story.... We began in weakness, we stand in power. In 1861 there was a single missionary in the field, Miss Marston, in Burma. In 1909, there were 4,710 unmarried women in the field, 1,948 of them from the United States. In 1861 there was one organized woman's society in our country; in 1910 there were forty-four.⁵³

⁴⁸ Cossey, *R. M. Evans*, p. 32.

⁴⁹ Rebecca Barr, "Revival in the Bahamas," *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel*, June 1, 1910, p. 7.

⁵⁰ Conn, *Where the Saints Have Trod*, p. 53.

⁵¹ Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, p. 232.

⁵² Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, p. 232.

⁵³ Helen Barrett Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern Lands* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), pp. 243-44.

By 1914 about 21,500 Protestant missionaries served overseas. McGee notes that “women constituted half this number and single women one-fourth.”⁵⁴ A large part of the dynamic success of Pentecostal missions is due to the effective ministry leadership of committed women who were seen as equal partners in ministry. This was particularly true at Azusa Street where seven of the twelve members of the Credential Committee were women. This committee selected and approved candidates for licensing.⁵⁵

In the year that Ida Evans landed in the Bahamas, Aimee Semple McPherson, founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, began missions work with her husband in China, shortly after a visit to the Pentecostal Convention in Toronto, Canada.⁵⁶ In 1910 Lillian Thrasher sailed to Egypt where she began her world-famous orphanage.⁵⁷ In 1910 one of the best known Church of God evangelists, J. W. Buckalew, received the Pentecostal experience in a revival preached by a female preacher, Miss Clyde Cotton, in Boaz, Alabama.⁵⁸

Mickey Crews also traces the active ministerial leadership of women in all phases of ministry, especially in the earlier days of the Church of God, devoting an entire chapter to the topic.⁵⁹ McGee reveals that, “Throughout most, if not all, of the history of Pentecostal missions, married and single women missionaries have constituted a majority.” He

⁵⁴ Gary B. McGee, *This Gospel Shall Be Preached: A History and Theology of Assemblies of God Foreign Missions to 1959* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1986), p. 22.

⁵⁵ Fred T. Corum, compiler, *Like as of Fire: A Reprint of the Old Azusa Street Papers* (Collected by the compiler, 160 Salem Street, Wilmington, MA, 1887), p. 6.

⁵⁶ Thomas William Miller, “The Canadian ‘Azusa’: The Hidden Mission in Toronto,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies* 8:1 (Spring 1986), pp. 5-29 (15).

⁵⁷ Beverly Graham, comp., *Letters from Lillian* (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Foreign Missions, 1983), p. 11. See also Conn, *Where the Spirits Have Trod*, pp. 15-16.

⁵⁸ J. W. Buckalew, *Incidents in the Life of J. W. Buckalew* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God Publishing House, 1920), p. 33.

⁵⁹ See the chapter, “Your Daughters Shall Prophesy,” in Crews, *The Church of God: A Social History*, pp. 92-107. See also the excellent overview by R. M. Riss, “Women, Role of,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, pp. 893-99.

notes, however, that the number of single women in denominational missions agencies has steadily declined. He says, "Other prominent women...including Elizabeth V. Baker, Marie Burgess Brown, Florence L. Crawford, Minnie T. Draper, Christine Gibson, Aimee Semple McPherson, Carrie Judd Montgomery, Virginia E. Moss, and Avis Swiger, while not serving as missionaries (with the exception of McPherson), impacted Pentecostal missions through the institutions that they founded (schools, missions agencies, denominations) or served."⁶⁰ David DuPlessis said, shortly before his death, "Jesus baptized the women exactly like the men, and I say, for the exact same purposes, as the men are baptized so the women are baptized."⁶¹

4. The Driving Force

The driving force and internal motivation that compelled Robert and Ida Evans to the mission field was, in the words of Charles W. Conn, the "rejuvenating experience he received in 1907"—the baptism of the Holy Ghost. "Even though his ministry was supposed to have ended," says Conn, "the fire of God flamed up in his heart, and he felt that he must go on in His cause."⁶²

A year after the Evans' Pentecostal baptism, one of the best, and perhaps one of earliest, biblical/theological statements on the interconnectedness of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the mission of the church was being written by J. Roswell Flowers (1888-1970), a Midwestern Pentecostal editor/publisher. Flowers was one of the pioneers of the Assemblies of God and founder of the *Pentecostal Evangel*, its official literary organ.⁶³ In an untitled editorial in the *Pentecost*, a monthly magazine which he first served, significantly as "foreign editor" and later as associate editor,⁶⁴ Flowers claimed that:

⁶⁰ Gary B. McGee, "Missions, Overseas (North American)," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, pp. 610-25 (613).

⁶¹ "A Meeting of Minds: Dunn, du Plessis and Hubbard Discuss Charismata," *Theology, News and Notes* 30:1 (March 1983), p. 6.

⁶² Conn, *Where the Saints Have Trod*, pp. 49-50.

⁶³ Gary B. McGee, "Flowers, Joseph James Roswell (1888-1920) and Alice Reynolds (1890-)," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, pp. 311-13.

⁶⁴ McGee, "Flowers, Joseph James Roswell," pp. 311-13.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost does not consist in simply speaking in tongues. No. It has a much more grand and deeper meaning than that. It fills our souls with the Love of God for lost humanity, and makes us much more willing to leave home, friends, and all to work in His vineyard, even if it be far away among the heathen....

'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,' this command of Jesus can only be properly fulfilled when we have obeyed that other command, 'Tarry ye in the City of Jerusalem till ye be endued with power from on high.' When we have tarried and received that power, then, and then only, are we fit to carry the gospel. When the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts, the missionary spirit comes in with it; they are inseparable, as the missionary spirit is but one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Carrying the gospel to hungry souls in this and other lands is but a natural result of receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost.⁶⁵

This remarkable insight of Flowers, who was not more than 20 years old when he wrote it, signified the symbiotic relationship between the supernatural gifts of the Spirit and world evangelization. Donald Gee (1891-1966), the prominent British Pentecostal leader who served as the first editor of *Pentecost*, the Pentecostal World Conference's quarterly, echoed Flowers' conviction over fifty years later in *Spiritual Gifts in the Work of the Ministry Today* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1963). He said, "There is no need to choose between a passion for souls, and a desire for spiritual gifts. They are mutually inclusive, not exclusive."⁶⁶ This "passion for souls" came out of the "driving force" that drove Pentecostals forward in evangelism.

The driving force speaks of the "Pentecostal ethos," the theological/motivational heartbeat of people like Robert and Ida Evans. From the beginning, Pentecostal missionaries saw themselves as a part of a missionary movement raised up by God to evangelize the world in the last days.⁶⁷ McGee rightly asserts that "the history of Pentecostalism

⁶⁵ J. Roswell Flowers, "(editorial)," *The Pentecost*, August 1908, p. 4.

⁶⁶ An excerpt from Donald Gee, *Spiritual Gifts and World Evangelization* is found in his chapter, "Spiritual Gifts and World Evangelization," in *Azusa Street and Beyond*, pp. 63-67.

⁶⁷ See L. Grant McClung, Jr., "Salvation Shock Troops," in *Pentecostals from the Inside Out*, ed. Harold B. Smith (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books/ Christianity Today, 1990), pp. 81-90.

cannot be properly understood apart from its missionary vision.”⁶⁸ That missionary vision was forged out of a number of converging streams, reaching back into the holiness movement of the late nineteenth century. Donald W. Dayton’s book, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), is must background reading. The call to overseas evangelism in those days, says McGee, came out of a “close and abiding” three-fold association between:

[T]he baptism of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues for an endowment of power in Christian witness, a fervent belief in the premillennial return of Christ and His command to evangelize to the uttermost parts of the earth.⁶⁹

Furthermore, McGee explains, the early pioneers had a missionary understanding of the practice of speaking in tongues, they held a “restorationist” belief that the signs and wonders of apostolic times were being restored in their own time, just prior to the imminent return of Christ, and they insisted that new missionaries for the field must be mobilized immediately.⁷⁰

5. The Torch Is Passed

From the time of his mid-century birth in 1847, until he left for the Bahamas in 1910, R. M. Evans had seen the transition from the Great Century of Protestant missionary advances in the nineteenth century to the Pentecostal century of the 1900s that is still unfolding in great missions power and expansion.

Evans was near 65, the traditional age of retirement, when he commenced his missionary journey. After three productive and foundational years, he was able to pass the torch to younger and capable leaders. In God’s providence, new members of the Pentecostal family were born within a few years after the “1910 world of R. M Evans.” These, and many like them, became especially prominent in the post-World War II expansion of the Pentecostal movement: Percy S. Brewster (1908-1980), Howard Courtney (1911-), David DuPlessis (1905-1987),

⁶⁸ Gary B. McGee, “Early Pentecostal Missionaries—They Went Everywhere Preaching the Gospel,” *Assemblies of God Heritage* 3:2 (Summer 1983), pp. 6-7..

⁶⁹ McGee, “Early Pentecostal Missionaries,” pp. 6-7.

⁷⁰ McGee, “The Azusa Street Revival and Twentieth-century Missions,” p. 58.

Joseph R. Flowers (1913-), Tommy Hicks (1909-1973), Melvin Hodges (1909-1988), J. Philip Hogan (1915-), Rex Humbard (1919-); Kathryn Kuhlman (1907-1976), Gordon Lindsey (1906-1973), J.O. Patterson (1912-), Oral Roberts (1918-), Demos Shakarian (1913-), Lester Sumrall (1913-), Joseph A. Synan (1905-1984), Milton A. Tomlinson (1906-), C. M. Ward (1909-) and Thomas F. Zimmerman (1912-1981).⁹⁵ Within the Church of God, outstanding leaders, many with significant missions impact, were also provided from this era: Paul H. Walker (1901-1975), Houston R. Morehead (1905-1990), Wade Horton (1908-), James A. Cross (1911-1990) and T. L. Forester (1911-1990).

Robert and Ida Evans, along with other pioneer missionaries of the Church of God, had a long and valiant heritage from the “Great Century” of evangelical Protestant missions. But, they were not alone since God was raising up a mighty Pentecostal force in the earth. “This third force” in Christianity was thrust forward by the driving force of the power of God experienced in New Testament signs and wonders. In the 1910 world of R. M. Evans, the God of all nations demonstrated that his mission would continue from generation to generation, until the whole earth is filled with his glory.