

# Charles F. Parham and His Role in the Development of the Pentecostal Movement: A Reevaluation

by James R. Goff, Jr.

**M**ODERN pentecostal writers have described pentecostalism as "a movement without a man."<sup>1</sup> The absence of a clear-cut founder, partly a result of conflicting claims by early pioneers, has accentuated the belief in the movement's divine origins. In the words of one pentecostal historian, "Pen-



Charles Fox Parham

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tecost can 'call no man . . . father'" since it is a "child of the Holy Ghost."<sup>2</sup> In contrast, a tombstone erected in Baxter Springs, Kansas, in 1929 reads: "Charles F. Parham, 1873-1929, Founder of the Apostolic Faith Movement."<sup>3</sup> "Apostolic Faith" was the most widely used name in the early years of the movement, but it was generally abandoned during the second decade of the century in favor of the more neutral "Pentecostal" label. Parham's supporters continued to use the original name.<sup>4</sup> Early pentecostal historians rarely mentioned Parham, preferring to ignore his contributions or at least to avoid giving him personal credit.<sup>5</sup> Belatedly, he has been recognized by historians both within and outside the movement, but Parham himself remains an obscure figure. His uniqueness and genuine importance as the first legitimate pentecostal prophet deserve fuller treatment.

1. Donald Gee, "Movement Without a Man," *Christian Life* 28 (July 1966):27-29, and Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 99.

2. Carl Brumback, *A Sound from Heaven* (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), 46, 61.

3. Sarah E. Parham, *The Life of Charles F. Parham*, (Joplin, Mo.: Tri-State Printing Co., 1930; reprint Birmingham, Ala.: Commercial Printing Co., 1977), 418-19.

4. At one point, there were at least four pentecostal groups by that name: (1) Parham's in Kansas; (2) E. N. Bell and a splinter of Parham's movement in Houston, Texas; (3) William Seymour's Los Angeles mission; and (4) Florence Crawford's mission in Portland, Oregon (a splinter of the Seymour group). E. N. Bell's group changed its periodical name to *Word and Witness* in 1912. Seymour's group died because of factionalism. Both Parham and Crawford retained the Apostolic Faith name.

5. Robert Anderson notes this ambiguity toward Parham in *Vision of the Disinherited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 47. He states that the first pentecostal historian to mention Parham was Klaude Kendrick in 1961; however, he overlooks the United Pentecostal Frank J. Ewart in *The Phenomenon of Pentecost* (St. Louis: Pentecostal Publishing House, 1947), 30-35. For an example of a major early pentecostal history that tells Parham's story without mentioning his name, see Stanley H. Frodsham, *With Signs Following* (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1926), 19-29.

Born in Muscatine, Iowa, on June 4, 1873, Parham grew up a "sick and weakly" child in the midst of frontier hardship. According to family tradition, he contracted a fever at the age of six months which left him for the next five years, he wrote later, with "dreadful spasms, and enlargement of the head, until my fore head [*sic*] became abnormally large." In 1878, the Parham family migrated to Cheney, Kansas, where Charles experienced a series of physical ailments. At age nine, "inflammatory rheumatism" left him "virtually tied up in a knot." A bout with a tapeworm and the medicines used to cure him resulted in "stomach disorders" and the belief that he was thereby "dwarfed" in physical size. He recalled that he "did not grow any for three years."<sup>6</sup>

It is not surprising that an unhealthy youth growing up in the 1880s in Cheney turned to religion for explanations of his unfortunate lot in life. Despite the lack of preachers in his earliest memories (he recalled

them "to be as scarce in those parts as hen's teeth") Parham felt a "call" to preach during his first bout with rheumatism at age nine. This incident began a series of intense religious experiences which usually coincided with his physical difficulties. As a result, he grew up with the Bible as "almost a constant companion" and practiced sermons on cattle, explaining to his indifferent audience "the realities of a future life; whether of the 'minstrels of bliss' or 'the wailing of the damned.'"<sup>7</sup> At thirteen, after attending revival meetings held by a Congregational minister discouraged by lack of results, Parham formally stood and was counted as a convert. Later he remembered rather skeptically that "this decision was made; first and uppermost . . . to keep the meeting running" since "it was quite an innovation and enjoyable place to spend the long evenings."<sup>8</sup> On the way home from the service, however, he experienced "real conversion." He reported a deep feeling of "conviction" come over him; he tried to control it by singing a gospel hymn. While repeating the words of dedication, his experience reached its climax:

There flashed from the Heaven, a light above the brightness of the sun; like a stroke of lightning it penetrated, thrilling every tissue and fiber of our being; knowing by experimental knowledge what Peter knew of old, that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God.<sup>9</sup>

By age fifteen, Parham was working in the Congregational church as a Sunday school teacher and holding public meetings "which were followed with marked results." The next year he entered Southwest Kansas College, a nearby state school, where he recollected that he was "often severely reprimanded and graded down in the examination" for spending more time in religious work than in his studies. In a short time, however, Parham "backslid," concluding that the ministry "was not near so alluring as some other professions." Thinking that his background of poor health might suggest an occupation, he considered medicine

6. Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 1-2. Parham stood at only five feet four inches. One doctor's assessment is that Parham's symptoms reveal three separate ailments. A childhood virus, probably encephalitis, could have temporarily affected his head size and permanently altered his growth. Rheumatic fever, while ordinarily a painful lifetime affliction, sometimes enters a state of remission. Early-twentieth-century medicines for a tapeworm (the third condition) were also capable of causing stomach damage. Interview with Dr. Charles Chalfant, May 2, 1983, Fayetteville, Arkansas.



Sarah E. Parham

7. Charles F. Parham, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, 4th ed. (Joplin, Mo.: Joplin Printing Co., 1944), 11-20. Parham states that "our parents were not religious" and "we scarcely knew anything about Church and Sunday School"; yet his mother undoubtedly made some religious impression on him, since at her death, he vowed to meet her in heaven. See Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 1. For a discussion of Kansas as a notable producer of prophets, see Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 48; see also Charles B. Driscoll, "Major Prophets of Holy Kansas," *American Mercury* 8 (May 1926):18-26.

8. Parham, *Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, 14.

9. *Ibid.*, 15. Parham's experience was similar to that of other major Christian figures such as the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:3) and Martin Luther.

as "the devil tried to make us believe that we could be a physician and a Christian too." However, at this point he had a renewed attack of rheumatic fever and was "given up by all physicians and friends." This illness convinced Parham that he should reaffirm his call to the ministry and forgo medical attention, believing that God would heal him. On this occasion, he was convinced that God did indeed cure his rheumatic fever, though he still was afflicted with a crippling condition that forced him "to hobble along on the sides of our feet." Sometime later he was "instantly healed" of this ailment; he gradually came to believe that his partial healing had been a result of "partial faith." This "partial faith" was exemplified by his inconsistent conduct: "getting sick and taking the Lord for our Healer and at other times taking medicine." He served for a time as pastor of a Methodist church, but "feeling the narrowness of sectarian churchism" and "often in conflict with the higher authorities," he gave up "denominationalism" and began independent evangelistic work.<sup>10</sup> By 1897, he had firmly committed himself

to this type of ministry, drawing support from independent holiness congregations. He had also settled on a belief in divine healing totally separated from medicine and doctors, a position prompting him to cancel his life insurance.<sup>11</sup>

From 1892 to 1898, Parham traveled through Kansas and Missouri preaching a message of conversion and "sanctification as a second definite work of grace," a new experience he had learned through his connection with the Methodist church. He married Sarah Thistlethwaite in 1896, locating for a time in Baldwin and then in Ottawa. After his decision in 1897 to commit himself totally to a healing ministry, he achieved a moderate degree of local fame as a faith healer.<sup>12</sup> The following year the Parhams established the Bethel Healing Home in Topeka and began publishing the

10. Ibid., 15-20.

11. Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 31-32. For Parham's position on divine healing, see *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, June 1915, 1-2.

12. Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 33-37.



In 1898 Charles and Sarah Parham established the Bethel Healing Home in this building on the corner of Fourth and Jackson streets, Topeka. "The ground floor furnished a large chapel, public reading room and printing office," Mrs. Parham wrote later in *The Life of Charles F. Parham*. "The second floor had fourteen rooms, and we kept the large windows in the parlors filled with flowers, as Mr. Parham was a great lover of flowers and we wanted to make the rooms look cheerful to the sick. The third floor was simply an attic, but we used it for sleeping purposes when our bed rooms were all occupied."



*Apostolic Faith*, a bimonthly periodical. The purpose of the home was "to provide homelike comforts to all who seek healing and a temporary stopping place for a friend while at the capital city."<sup>13</sup> Essentially, the work was a religious mission providing services on a "faith" system. While both the home and the periodical were originally assigned regular rates, Parham changed this practice soon after his arrival in Topeka. The *Apostolic Faith* was then issued without charge and the home charged only for board, making even further exceptions for the "worthy poor." Not unlike the other rescue missions that flourished in American cities, Parham's work was apparently successful. A New Year's dinner in 1900 served over three hundred of the city's poor.<sup>14</sup>

By the time Parham began operating the home in Topeka, his doctrinal beliefs included "salvation by faith, healing by faith, laying on of hands and prayer; sanctification by faith; coming (pre-millennium) of Christ; [and] the baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire, which seals the Bride and bestows the gifts."<sup>15</sup> The designation of the baptism of the Holy Ghost as a step distinct from sanctification was not yet widespread within the holiness movement. It is conceivable that Parham obtained this idea through correspondence with Benjamin H. Irwin, an innovative Iowan who began preaching such a position in the early 1890s.<sup>16</sup> Possibly in an effort to learn more about Holy Spirit baptism and certainly because of curiosity over reports of other holiness successes, in 1900 Parham left two ministers in charge of the home in Topeka and traveled north to visit Frank W. Sandford's "Holy Ghost and Us" Bible school in Durham, Maine. On the same trip, he also visited John Alexander Dowie's healing ministry in Zion City, Illinois; the "Eye-Opener work" in Chicago; "Malone's work" in Cleveland; and "Dr. Simpson's work" in Nyack, New York.<sup>17</sup>

Upon his return to Topeka, Parham discovered that the two holiness ministers had "not only taken my

building but most of my congregation." Following the biblical admonition to "turn the other cheek," in October 1900 Parham opened a school in "Stone's Folly," an unfinished and architecturally curious mansion outside Topeka. In this isolated and bizarre site, he and forty students began a study of the Bible, aided by a "prayer chain" carried out in one of the building's two domes which was designated the "Prayer Tower."<sup>18</sup>

The accounts of what followed are somewhat confusing, but apparently Parham instructed his students to look for the "Biblical evidence" of the "Apostolic baptism" as found in Acts 2.<sup>19</sup> Leaving the school for a three-day revival in late December, Parham returned to find that all of his students agreed that the only "indisputable proof" to be found in Acts was "that they spoke in tongues." A young student, Agnes Ozman, requested Parham to lay hands on her and pray for her to receive this baptism of tongues, after which "a halo seemed to surround her head and face, and she began speaking in the Chinese language, and was unable to speak English for three days." In the week that followed, Parham and many of the other students received the experience also.<sup>20</sup>

As word spread of the strange experiences at the new Bible school, Parham's ministry gained a public interest not even his reported healings had elicited:

We were besieged with reporters from Topeka papers. Kansas City, St. Louis and many other cities sent reporters who brought with them professors of languages, foreigners, Government interpreters, and they gave the work the most crucial test. One Government interpreter claimed to have heard twenty Chinese dialects distinctly spoken in one night. All agree that the students of the college were speaking in the languages of the world, and that with proper accent and intonation. There was no chattering, jabbering, or stuttering.<sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately, Parham's claims are not verifiable; press coverage of subsequent meetings indicates a much less enthusiastic reception. In late January 1901, both teacher and Bible students held a series of meet-

13. *Apostolic Faith*, Topeka, January 1, 1900, 8. For an examination of Parham's faith-healing activity in Topeka, see David E. Gray, "Lean Not Thou on the Arm of Flesh," *Shawnee County Historical Society Bulletin* 57 (November 1980):143-50.

14. *Apostolic Faith*, Topeka, January 1, 1900, 7 (reprinting local newspaper story).

15. *Ibid.*, 8.

16. Synan states that Parham and Irwin were associated briefly before 1901 but gives no reference (*Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 68). For a discussion on Irwin, see pp. 61-67. In 1925, Parham referred to "Irving and the Fire baptized." Perhaps this was a misprint, but the relationship, if any, is certainly sketchy. See *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, April 1925, 3.

17. Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 48; Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 50. See also Klaude Kendrick, *The Promise Fulfilled* (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), 46-47, on the importance of the visit to Sandford's work in Maine.

18. For a description of the elaborate facilities at "Stone's Folly" and the daily schedule of the school, see Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 57-59. See also John W. Ripley, "Erastus Stone's Dream Castle—Birthplace of Pentecostalism," *Shawnee County Historical Society Bulletin* 52 (June 1975):42-53.

19. For the best analysis of the differing accounts, see Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 52-56.

20. Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 52-55. Varying accounts list the first experience of Ozman as December 31 and January 1 (compare 52 and 59).

21. *Ibid.*, 54-55. For reprints of newspaper articles as given by Parham, see 70-76; also *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, July 1912, 1-10, and a series carried in the October to December 1927 issues.

ings in Kansas City, Missouri. Intrigued by the recent reports of tongues speaking, the local press was distressed by the inability of the group to perform upon demand. The *Kansas City Journal* reported that "last night neither the marvelously gifted Miss Ozman nor any of the rest were able to speak anything but English, and they were obliged to confine themselves to prophesying." Noting Ozman's claim of having "spoken to foreigners in their own tongues . . . perfectly," the reporter wrote: "This is even more than could truthfully be said of her English."<sup>22</sup>

Though Parham himself seems to have made favorable reports as "a sincere and extremely optimistic fanatic,"<sup>23</sup> most of his band provided the press with an example of the religious practices of those on the fringe of social acceptability. In obvious delight, a

*Kansas City Times* reporter concluded his article with this description:

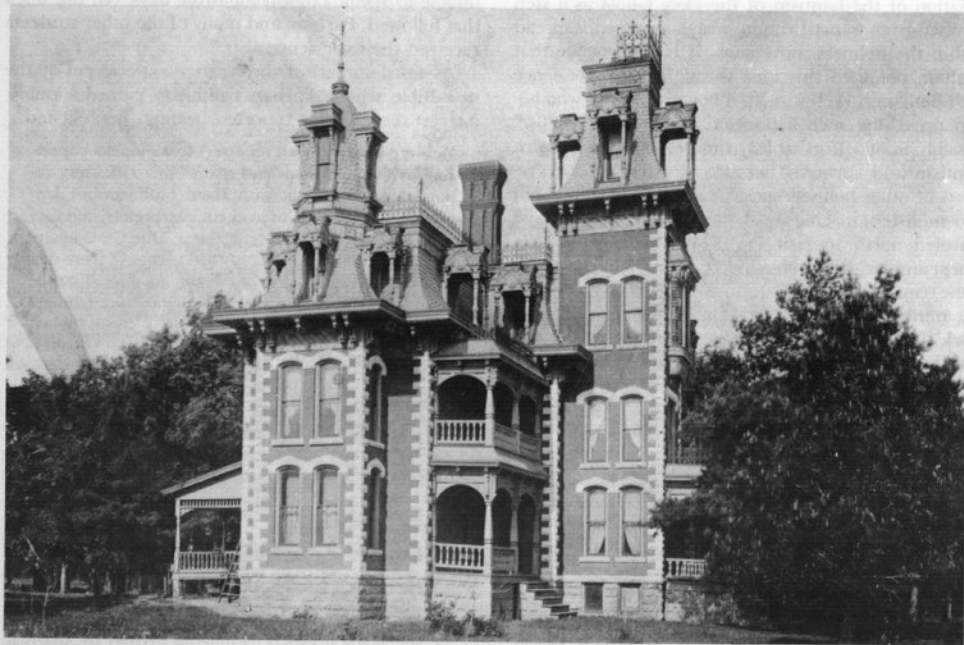
Parham and his wife, Miss Ozman and Miss Thistlethwaite are quite intelligent, they wear clothes which fit, and have the appearance of people who frequent the bath; but the others of the "family," as Parham calls them, are about as tacky a looking outfit as one would see in a trip around the world. They may be clean spiritually, but physically they are anything but shining marks of cleanliness.<sup>24</sup>

After the early excitement caused by the press coverage, Parham's movement quickly faded. Personal tragedy struck when his year-old son died in March. During the summer, Parham's lease on "Stone's Folly" was not renewed, and the property was sold to new owners for a roadhouse or resort. His school disbanded, Parham soon moved his family and a small

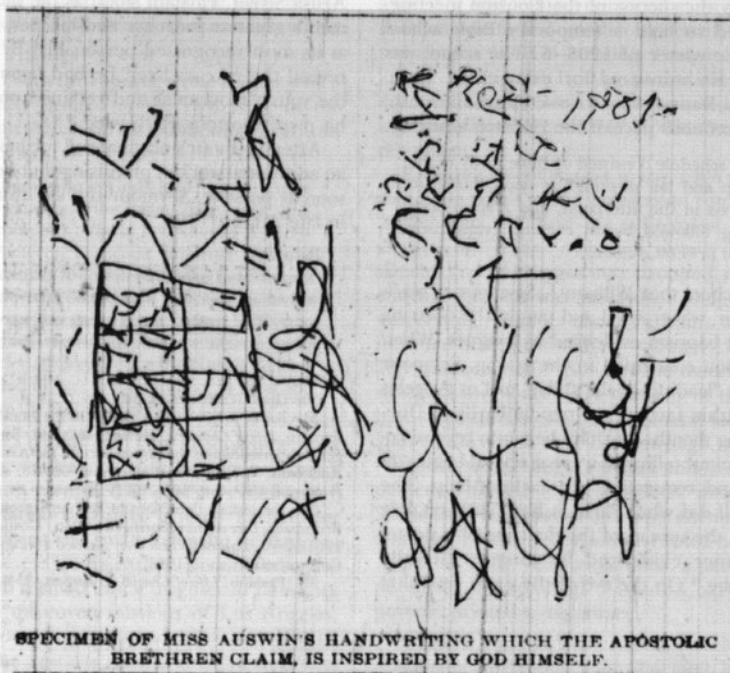
22. Both quotes are from the *Kansas City Journal*, January 22, 1901.

23. Ibid.

24. *Kansas City Times*, January 27, 1901.



With profits gained from his real estate dealings, Erastus Stone began building this three-story mansion in Topeka in 1887. After investing some \$30,000, however, he ran out of money and the house was never completed, nor did Stone ever live in it; thus the mansion became known as "Stone's Folly." Late in 1900 Charles Parham rented it for his Bethel College and Bible School, remaining there until mid-1901, when he and his followers were displaced by the new owner, Topeka bootlegger Harry Croft. Croft then operated the property as a roadhouse, but in December 1901 "Stone's Folly" was completely destroyed by fire.



*In early 1901 the Topeka Daily Capital illustrated an article about the activities of Parham and his followers with this drawing labeled "specimen of Miss Auswin's handwriting which the apostolic brethren claim is inspired by God himself."*

core of faithful followers to Kansas City. Here another Bible school was operated for a short time, but economic difficulties resulted in "great trials and persecution." The experience set the mood for Parham's first book, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, which he wrote in Kansas City in 1901 and published the following year.<sup>25</sup>

In 1902, Parham moved to Lawrence, Kansas, to resume an evangelistic ministry with a renewed emphasis on healing. Holding particularly successful meetings in El Dorado Springs, Missouri, and Galena, Kansas, he again gained some public notice. In 1904, the *Joplin Daily News-Herald* termed him "The Divine Healer."<sup>26</sup> Parham retained his emphasis on tongues speaking as "one brother from Galena received the Pentecost and for almost a week could not speak Eng-

lish."<sup>27</sup> Still, Parham's healing services brought him the most recognition. He frequently had lines of "seekers" so long that he prayed for the sick while seated in a chair.<sup>28</sup> By 1905, Parham's evangelistic fame had spread to Texas. In a Houston meeting he healed a paralysis victim of a widely publicized street car accident in 1902, driving public attention to his meetings. The *Houston Suburbanite* recorded the healing:

[She] arose from her chair and walked about the hall in a state of ecstatic joy, shouting, clapping her hands, and praising the Lord for restoration. The incident created much excitement. Mrs. Dulaney walked down the stairs from the hall, and went home. She has attended their meetings daily since, but not in the chair.<sup>29</sup>

27. *Apostolic Faith*, Melrose, September 1905, 3.

28. Ethel E. Goss, *The Winds of God* (New York: Comet Press Books, 1958), 14-15.

29. Quoted in Kendrick, *Promise Fulfilled*, 62. See also Goss, *Winds of God*, 30, and Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 113-15.

25. Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 77-86.

26. *Ibid.*, 86-99.



Heartened by the success of the Houston meeting, Parham decided to hold a temporary Bible school there during the winter of 1905–6. The school was designed to train ministers for evangelistic work. Howard Goss, a Kansan who followed Parham south, reported the strenuous pace of the Houston academy:

Our week day schedule consisted of Bible study in the morning, shop and jail meetings at noon, house to house visitations in the afternoon, and a six o'clock street meeting followed by an evening evangelistic service at 7:30 or 8:00 o'clock.<sup>30</sup>

It was in this school that William J. Seymour, a black Baptist preacher, was trained and taught the doctrine of a Holy Spirit baptism evidenced by tongues. When the school session concluded in the spring, Seymour proclaimed the "leading of the spirit" to Los Angeles and was given train fare for the trip by Parham. During the following months, Parham began to receive reports from Seymour telling of a great revival begun on Azusa Street and requesting his teacher's help. The resulting revival did what Parham had not been able to do; it began the spread of the doctrine of a pentecostal experience evidenced by tongues literally around the globe.<sup>31</sup> On the eve of the great revival at

Azusa Street, Parham stood as the pentecostal movement's greatest preacher and teacher, clearly ranking as its most recognized personality. By the end of the revival three years later, he had been discredited by the young movement and retained only a portion of his own Apostolic Faith wing.<sup>32</sup>

After Seymour's original call for help, Parham sent an additional worker, promising that he would come as soon as possible. Seymour replied quite optimistically in late August 1906:

Dear Bro. Parham:

Sister Hall has arrived, and is planning out a great revival in this city, that shall take place when you come. The revival is still going on here that has been going on since we came to this city. But we are expect-

30. Goss, *Winds of God*, 34.

31. For Seymour's participation in the Houston Bible school, see Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 137, 142. For Seymour's Los Angeles experience and the importance of the Azusa Street revival, see Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 62–78, and Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 103–16.

32. For serious defections in Parham's group by 1909, see Carl Brumback, *Like a River* (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), 2–3. This defection later formed a wing of the Assemblies of God consolidation in 1914.

33. Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 154.



During the winter of 1905–6, Charles Parham's Bible school in Houston was held in this rented house, the "Apostolic Faith Movement Headquarters."

ing a general one to start again when you come, that these little revivals will all come together and make one great union revival.<sup>35</sup>

Parham, pleased with the reports, wrote a letter which Seymour promptly printed in the first issue of the *Apostolic Faith*, an Azusa Street publication begun in September of 1906:

Bro. Chas. Parham, who is God's leader in the Apostolic Faith Movement, writes from Tonganoxie [sic], Kansas, that he expects to be in Los Angeles Sept. 15. Hearing that Pentecost had come to Los Angeles, he writes, "I rejoice in God over you all, my children, though I have never seen you; but since you know the Holy Spirit's power, we are baptized by one Spirit into one body. Keep together in unity till I come, then in a grand meeting let all prepare for the outside fields I desire, unless God directs to the contrary, to meet and see all who have the full Gospel when I come."<sup>34</sup>

Parham made a trip to Zion City in September and thus delayed his rendezvous with Seymour. Dowie's reputation, recently tarnished by charges of polygamy and misappropriation of funds, offered Parham an avenue for increasing the small following he had begun on his trip several years earlier. Undoubtedly, the prospects in 1906 seemed much brighter in Zion City than among the unproven missions of Los Angeles, and Parham appropriately altered his schedule.<sup>35</sup> In October 1906, the *Apostolic Faith* printed a front-page story naming Parham as the founder and noting "we are expecting Bro. Parham to visit Los Angeles in a few days."<sup>36</sup> Parham finally arrived in late October; by then the revival was in full swing. With "utter surprise and astonishment," he helped conduct several services, increasingly appalled at "the manifestations of the flesh," "spiritualistic controls," and "hypnotism" practiced around the altar. The revival leaders used such techniques as "the suggestion of certain words and sounds," "the working of the chin," and "the massage of the throat" to encourage tongues speaking. Parham viewed these as "excesses" and evidently attempted without success to curb them. He wrote: "After preaching two or three times, I was informed by two of the elders, one who was a hypnotist . . . that I was not wanted in that place."<sup>37</sup> Seymour, now "possessed with

a spirit of leadership," remained at Azusa Street while Parham conducted another series of services across town in the WCTU building. Parham's name was no longer mentioned by the periodical published by Azusa Street; the December issue noted that "the Lord was the founder and He is the Projector of this movement."<sup>38</sup>

Parham's loss of stature in late 1906 and early 1907 was also a result of the widespread rumor that he had "fallen into sin" and his subsequent indictment of charges in Texas. Although details are extremely sketchy, and all charges were dropped, it seems apparent that Parham was accused of some sort of sexual misconduct. Rumors about Parham's alleged offense included three possibilities — adultery, homosexuality, and masturbation.<sup>39</sup> None of the theories are conclusive, and it is conceivable that any of the three could have been discussed in such general terms as to have allowed the others to be born through rumor. The fact remains that although Parham and his defenders repeatedly denied all accusations, accounting them "slandorous lies" stirred up by his enemies, the rumors damaged his influence and disrupted his movement.<sup>40</sup> As late as 1912, *Word and Witness*, a pentecostal paper published by some of Parham's early Texas supporters, printed a disclaimer:

Charles F. Parham, who is claiming to be the head and leader of the Apostolic Faith Movement, has long since been repudiated . . . until he repents and confesses his sins . . . Let all Pentecostal and Apostolic Faith people of the churches or [sic] God take notice and be not misled by his claims.<sup>41</sup>

38. *Apostolic Faith*, Los Angeles, December 1906, 1. Later works from Azusa Street stressed that Parham had attempted to maintain authority, but "we had prayed down our own revival." See Frank Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Privately published, 1925); reprinted as *Azusa Street* (Plainfield, H.J.: Logos International, 1980), 68–69. Parham is not mentioned by name but is clearly implied. For Parham's counterclaim that Seymour was obsessed with authority, see *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, September 1913, 10. See also Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 164.

39. For the best analysis of the variant rumors, see Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 140. See also Nils Bloch-Hoell, *The Pentecostal Movement* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget; London: Allen and Unwin; New York: Humanities Press, 1964), 19–20, and Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 112–13.

40. See Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 181–88, 198; *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, December–January 1912–13, 8–9. An interview with Mrs. Naomi Bush, former editor of *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, on March 31, 1983, revealed the prevailing view among Parham's descendant group that the rumors were begun by "Parham's enemies" during a preaching tour in New York.

41. *Word and Witness*, Malvern, Arkansas, October 20, 1912, 3. See also Parham's appraisal by the antipentecostal polemic H. J. Stolee, *Pentecostalism: The Problem of the Modern Tongues Movement* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1936; reprinted as *Speaking in Tongues*, 1963), 63.

34. *Apostolic Faith*, Los Angeles, September 1906, 1. As noted above, this name was widely used without distinction.

35. Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 155–60. On Dowie's charges, see Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 72–73.

36. *Apostolic Faith*, Los Angeles, October 1906, 1.

37. Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 163. For the entire account of Azusa Street from Parham's viewpoint, see 161–70. See also Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 22–24.



Having been repudiated by what was to become the mainstream of American pentecostalism, Parham permanently located his ministry in Baxter Springs, Kansas, in March 1909. He remained in contact with a small but loyal group of followers through the *Apostolic Faith*. In addition, he published his second book, a highly millenarian treatise, *The Everlasting Gospel*, around 1919.<sup>42</sup> For two decades he held successful revival campaigns in California, Idaho, Oregon, Michigan, and New York, as well as in his home-based tri-state area of Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma.<sup>43</sup> In early 1928, he went on a long-anticipated, three-month tour of Palestine. On his return he lectured widely on the Palestinian region, delighting his audiences with a slide presentation.<sup>44</sup> Already in declining health when he made the trip, he was further weakened by the rigorous activity and died on January 29, 1929. He refused to the end to take any medicine for relief of pain.<sup>45</sup> His funeral in Baxter Springs was held at the town theater and was attended by a crowd of twenty-five hundred. The line viewing his casket took over an hour to pass by.<sup>46</sup>

Parham's thought played an important role in the development of American pentecostalism. The earliest phase of the movement was clearly dictated by his theological framework. Later stages were still indebted to him for the principal religious distinction of pentecostalism — the doctrine of Holy Spirit baptism evidenced by speaking in tongues. Parham was rigidly orthodox to a literalist interpretation, though occasionally ambiguous and quite often innovative. He well represented the early stages of the movement itself; both sought religious identity amidst a wide range of freewheeling interpretations and theological patterns of thought.

Parham never strayed from his original conviction that authentic tongues speaking was xenoglossic (the speaking of actual foreign languages not known to the speaker). He boasted during the 1905 Houston revival that "professors from the city schools and colleges" serving as "unbiased and competent judges" were par-

ticularly impressed with the "original accent" of the tongues speakers, who performed as though they were "native masters in the Old World."<sup>47</sup> He believed that the utility of the experience explained its importance and its place in the divine historical scheme. These xenoglossic tongues were to be used by believers as missionary tools to hasten the work of world evangelism and usher in the dawn of the eschaton. This idea was common in the early development of Azusa Street, but later pentecostal leaders modified the belief, deemphasizing the missionary aspect and interpreting tongues as both known and unknown languages (glossolalia).<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, Parham continued to preach that tongues were missionary xenoglossa and claimed at least a measured amount of success:

We have several missionaries in the field who have the gift of tongues, who not only speak the language and understand the natives, but can use the language intelligently; it has become a gift to them.<sup>49</sup>

After his break with Azusa Street, Parham increasingly attacked other branches of pentecostalism for their "counterfeit Pentecost, with chattering, and jabbering, and windsucking," noting that "two-thirds of the Pentecost people are being deceived by these forces."<sup>50</sup> By 1910 he had established a "National Camp Meeting" in Baxter Springs in the hope of correcting the fanatical pentecostal element that seemed to have accepted "a modern Delphic creed . . . with message givers and interpreters as officiating priests."<sup>51</sup>

Parham also became increasingly interested in millenarianism. His views did not differ in substance from those of other pentecostals, although he stressed and explored the idea in more graphic detail. The 1910 National Camp Meeting offered the listener "a clear, concise eschatology" that spelled doom for the "so-called Christian nations" and the sympathetic, but misguided, "powers of Socialism and Christian Sci-

42. Charles F. Parham, *The Everlasting Gospel* (N.p., [1918–19]). Although it is claimed in the most recent reprinting (Baxter Springs: Privately published, 1942; see Foreword) that Parham wrote the book in 1911 (thus prior to World War I), internal evidence overwhelmingly supports the period 1918–19. See especially 19, 31. Also, the third edition of *Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, by Parham's wife (Joplin, Mo.: Tri-State Printing Co., 1931) states that *The Everlasting Gospel* was published "during the time of the war" (see Foreword).

43. See Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 301–47.

44. *Ibid.*, 349–99. See also *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, from January to May 1928.

45. Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 405–13, 416–18.

46. *Ibid.*, 415–16.

47. *Ibid.*, 116.

48. Synan errs in noting that "very few pentecostal leaders accepted this premise" (*Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 103, n. 19). The earliest material prior to 1909 indicates that this was a common assumption. See James R. Goff, Jr., "Pentecostal Millenarianism: The Development of Premillennial Orthodoxy, 1909–1943," *Ozark Historical Review* 12 (Spring 1983):14–24.

49. Parham, *Everlasting Gospel*, 68. A sermon preached by Parham twenty-one days after the original outbreak at Topeka in 1901 reveals that Parham had already assumed this position. See Parham, *Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, 25–38.

50. *Ibid.*, 118.

51. *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, December 25, 1910, 3–4. For further articles by Parham on the same theme, see February 1914, 8–10; June 1925, 2–6; and July 1927, 2–3.

ence."<sup>52</sup> As World War I dominated the news during the following decade, Parham's prophetic interests grew stronger. By 1918–19, he envisioned an impending world crisis between labor and capital that would set the stage for Christ's intervention and the subsequent millennial age.<sup>53</sup> Faithful to the original idea of the pentecostal revival's importance in history, Parham interpreted the outpouring of God's spirit as a sure sign that the end time was near. Therefore, he was certain that the events occurring in his own day heralded the dawn of Christ's triumphant reign.

In some theological areas, Parham clearly differed from mainstream pentecostals both during and after Azusa Street. From his wife's grandfather, who was a Quaker, Parham adopted the belief in the "utter destruction of the wicked" and in "conditional immortality." Always a biblical literalist, Parham became convinced that "the Scriptures nowhere teach any other doctrine, opponents to the contrary notwithstanding."<sup>54</sup> Thus, believers were to be granted immortality in eternal life, while nonbelievers suffered final death, not an eternal hell. This ultimate fate, determined in advance by divine "foreknowledge," fit a predestinarian scheme which Parham supported by interpreting selected biblical passages literally.<sup>55</sup>

In addition, Parham accepted an innovative interpretation which helped him accommodate much of the Darwinian controversy. By comparing the dissimilarities of the two creation accounts of Genesis, he decided that there was a distinction between the Adamic race and the offspring of an earlier human creation. The result, coupled with the addition of thousand-year days for the earth's formation, allowed Parham to answer "the questions of skeptics and infidels" and still maintain his literalistic view of the Bible.<sup>56</sup>

Parham also proved different on the matter of a "faith ministry." While his adherence to operating his movement with no visible means of support was not

unique to early pentecostal evangelists, the reluctance to stray from that ideal did set him apart. After declaring his Topeka healing home a "faith work" shortly after 1898, Parham maintained the naive conviction that "without having a stipulated salary every true minister called of God would receive exactly what he is worth."<sup>57</sup> As late as 1919, he admonished his fellow ministers to take the leap of faith:

Shame on you of the twentieth century — you who are afraid to do this! I dare you preachers to try it! Most of you are miserable cowards, afraid to step out on God's promises, afraid to trust Him; and that's why your work amounts to so little.<sup>58</sup>

Parham's firm insistence that his school remain a faith institution, coupled with his disillusioning experience within Methodism, prompted him to repudiate any denominational structures — a fact that undoubtedly hindered the growth of his own wing of the pentecostal movement.<sup>59</sup>

Parham's thought included a variety of other issues important in the development of early pentecostalism. On social matters he clearly represented the ambiguity that typified the movement's struggle for identity. Faced with realities, he often altered his ideals for the sake of practicality. Officially a pacifist whose "principles and belief forbid the shedding of blood," Parham referred to volunteers for military service as "self-appointed murderers" receiving even less than "thirty pieces of silver."<sup>60</sup> During World War I, he encouraged

56. For Parham's views on creation, see *Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, 81–85, and *Everlasting Gospel*, 1–5. Nevertheless, Parham vehemently opposed the idea of man's evolutionary development. See *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, February 1927, 1–5. The idea of two separate creations appears possibly to have been unique to Parham. A preliminary search of early reactions to Darwinian thought failed to uncover a similar position. The same general idea was proposed by an Oklahoma State University faculty member in 1969 to explain biblical support for differences between Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon man. No references are given for the background of the idea. See Bradley O. Brauser, *Vestermorrows* (Ponca City, Okla.: Privately published, 1969), 38–54.

57. Parham, *Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, 66.

58. Parham, *Everlasting Gospel*, 8.

59. For Parham's understanding of the evils of leadership, see *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, September 1913, 9–10. Parham's movement has continued this lack of organization; it presently comprises an estimated seventy-five churches and seven thousand members. These figures are arbitrary, as no rolls are kept and no general conventions are held. The only unifying factors are the periodical, *Apostolic Faith*, and a Bible school which operates totally on voluntary gifts. The group also accepts Parham's theological differences with mainstream pentecostalism. Interview with Rev. Jack Cornell, superintendent of the Apostolic Faith Bible School, Baxter Springs, March 31, 1983.

60. Parham, *Everlasting Gospel*, 59, and Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 272. See also *Apostolic Faith*, Melrose, September 1905, 7. For pentecostals' attitude toward war and military service, see Holenweger, *Pentecostals*, 400–401.

52. Ibid., December 25, 1910, 3. Parham appeared to be quite sympathetic with socialist ideals, although he approached the subject as a neutral observer of their place within the millenarian scheme. He clearly denounced the excesses of capitalism. See Parham, *Everlasting Gospel*, 19–30; also *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, March 1913, 8–9, and Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 259–74.

53. Parham had discussed this millenarian framework as early as 1902 in *Voice Crying in the Wilderness* (see 109–38) although he clearly detailed his predictions by his 1919 work. (See Parham, *Everlasting Gospel*; compare 19–30, 33–62, and 77–91.) See also *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, March 1913, 8–9, and Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 259–74.

54. *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, December 25, 1910, 2; Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 14. See also Parham, *Everlasting Gospel*, 92–95, 111–17.

55. Parham, *Everlasting Gospel*, 107–9.

his associates to file for exemptions from combat duty, although this tactic did not always prove successful. When his close friend Rolland Romack was killed in action in September 1918, Parham reacted quite naturally with "a great spirit of revenge" and momentarily considered the possibility of enlisting to "avenge the death of one we loved so well." His initial reaction tempered, Parham decided instead to purchase a "liberty bond" and thereby support "the great cause" for which his young friend had died.<sup>61</sup>

Parham's racial views were also typical of early pentecostals.<sup>62</sup> Although his Topeka school apparently enrolled only whites, his ministry by 1905 had expanded to include both blacks and American Indians. Even so, he handled the racial issue carefully, paying attention to the prevailing attitudes of different sections of the country and probably intending racial separation as the prevailing model for local church worship.<sup>63</sup> His experience at Azusa Street clearly shocked him and disturbed his racial sensitivities:

Men and women, whites and blacks, knelt together or fell across one another; frequently, a white woman, perhaps of wealth and culture, could be seen thrown back in the arms of a big "buck nigger," and held tightly thus as she shivered and shook in freak imitation of Pentecost. Horrible, awful shame!<sup>64</sup>

After Azusa Street, Parham's meetings, like those of the mainstream pentecostals, became increasingly segregated. The racial mores of American culture proved too strong for the original ideal of interracial cooperation. By 1927, Parham felt comfortable offering praise for the work of the Ku Klux Klan and "their high ideals for the betterment of mankind."<sup>65</sup>

Parham's attitude toward education echoed the distrust of other early pentecostal leaders in secular schools and higher learning in general. Education,

they believed, bred unbelief. When a Baptist preacher with "a Ph.D., D.D., and L.L.D. on the hind end of his name" expressed his conviction that no one could speak in foreign languages without having previously learned them, Parham proudly related this reply:

I challenged that preacher to come to my school for just one week. I promised him a post graduate course that would enable him to put another degree on the end of his name. I would have gotten him so humble before God, and so willing to let God use him, that he would have come out of the post graduate course with A.S.S. on the end of his name. Could I have gotten him to become as humble as was Balaam's mule, God would have talked through him in tongues.<sup>66</sup>

Though liberal arts colleges and more conventional Bible institutes have subsequently been founded by other pentecostals, Parham's legacy has remained to the present day a faith school with the Bible as its central textbook.<sup>67</sup>

Parham's importance to the pentecostal movement is undeniable. Recent historians have properly credited him with first developing the idea that speaking in tongues was the evidence of Holy Spirit baptism.<sup>68</sup> As this tenet gives pentecostalism its theological identity, Parham deserves the distinction as the movement's founder.

Despite his loss of influence within the movement after Azusa Street, Parham was clearly the first nationally known pentecostal prophet. His work in evangelistic tent revivals and Bible-training seminars covered every section of the country with the exception of the Southeast.<sup>69</sup> He sometimes paraded in the streets in "the robes of a bishop," along with students dressed in colorful "Palestinian costumes." One of the students recalled that "while explaining the garments, he could get in enough Gospel to impress any man."<sup>70</sup> He undoubtedly was a great speaker; after one week of serv-

61. Parham to his family, Houston, Texas, October 10, 1918. Parham himself had registered for the conflict prior to Romack's death, although he never served. See also Romack's obituary, *Baxter Daily Citizen*, October 22, 1918. All these materials are contained in the Parham Scrapbook, Apostolic Faith Bible College, Baxter Springs, Kansas.

62. For discussion of the broader movement, see Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 189-93.

63. On Indians, see Goss, *Winds of God*, 11-12. On blacks, see Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 63, 137, 142.

64. *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, December 1912, 4.

65. *Ibid.*, March 1927, 5. See also January 1927, 7. Driscoll points out that religious support of the Ku Klux Klan in Kansas was a result, by and large, of a fear of Catholics (see "Major Prophets of Holy Kansas," p. 22). Nevertheless, wider implications were understood. Parham's racial ideology was no doubt affected by his support of the Anglo-Israeli theory which presents Anglo-Saxons as the descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel, and thus, of God's chosen people. See Parham, *Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, 94-99, 105-8.

66. *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, November 1913, 13. The allusion is to Balaam's talking donkey of Numbers 22:30.

67. Cornell interview; also *Apostolic Faith Bible College 1983* (privately published pamphlet). For a discussion of Pentecostal denominational schools, see Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 209-10.

68. See Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 139-40; Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 99; and John Thomas Nichol, *Pentecostalism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 28. Other writers have preferred to stress Seymour's importance. See Leonard Lovett, "Black Origins of the Pentecostal Movement," in Vinson Synan, ed., *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1975), 123-41.

69. In 1912 Parham used a forty-by-eighty-foot tent in a revival meeting in Perris, California. See *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, March 1912, 1. In 1904 in Galena, Kansas, he abandoned a tent for "a large double storeroom that would shelter 2000 people." *Ibid.*, July 1912, 1.

70. Goss, *Winds of God*, 35. See also Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, 104-5.



ices in faction-riddled Zion City in 1908, a coworker remarked that "practically all of . . . [the] congregation will be won over to our way of looking at things."<sup>71</sup> While Parham's visibility never matched that of Aimee Semple McPherson in the 1920s, primarily because of her successful use of radio, his was clearly a charismatic personality.<sup>72</sup> Like McPherson, as well as Oral Roberts in the 1950s and 1960s, Parham understood the art of adaptability. Ever creative, he nevertheless centered his ministry around tactics that had proved successful. Thus, after interest waned in the eruption of tongues speaking at Topeka, Parham returned to a format that had brought him his initial success — faith healing. Also, like McPherson and Roberts, he appealed to a broad audience, never limiting his following denominationally nor even to those who accepted pentecostal theology.

While the pentecostal sect that accepted Parham's

leadership has remained small, it has been intensely loyal to him. With few conventional methods of organization, he succeeded in establishing a lasting affiliation of churches. Often called "Daddy Parham" in his later years, he himself remained the center of the group's identity.<sup>73</sup> Although Parham repeatedly denied any desire for recognition, he lost few opportunities to point out that he had originated this initial pentecostal sect in Topeka in 1901.

Outside his clique of supporters, Charles Parham was representative of the complexity of the pentecostal movement. He was innovative yet fundamentalistic, anti-intellectual yet a founder of schools, a proponent of Christian unity yet extremely critical of those with whom he differed, otherworldly with an intense desire for recognition and respectability. In short, he represents the complexity of late-nineteenth-century theological ideas and religious expressions; this same religious diversity prompted the rise of twentieth-century pentecostalism. [KH]

71. T.G.A. to Marie Burgess, December 12, 1908. For further description of Parham's preaching style, see Goss, *Winds of God*, 17. A good example of Parham's ability to inject humor, bits of trivia, and emotion into a sermon is found in *Apostolic Faith*, Baxter Springs, April 1925, 9–15.

72. On McPherson, see Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 197–200.

73. For references to "Daddy," see Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham*, Dedication, and the letters from Parham to Romack, September 13 and 28, 1918. The latter is signed "Your ole true Frind [sic] and Daddy, Chas. F. Parham."