

“Choosing the Jesus Way:” The Assemblies of God’s Home Missions to American
Indians and the Development of a Pentecostal Indian Identity.

by

Angela Tarango

Graduate Program in Religion
Duke University

Date: _____

Approved:

Grant Wacker, Supervisor

Yaakov Ariel

Julie Byrne

J. Kameron Carter

Laurie Maffly-Kipp

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Graduate Program in Religion
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the history of the Assemblies of God's Home Missions to American Indians, the development of an American Indian leadership in the denomination and the development of a Pentecostal Indian identity. The history that is told in this work is that of a century-long struggle by American Indian Pentecostals for autonomy, leadership, and recognition within the Assemblies of God. I argue that the AG's efforts to establish indigenous churches in its home missions work to American Indians bore two important and largely unanticipated consequences. The first was that it prompted American Indian Pentecostals to forge a new identity: fully Indian and fully Pentecostal. The second was that it forced white Pentecostals to own up to their belief in the indigenous principle: that God's Spirit fell equally on peoples, without regard to ethnicity or social standing. I focus mainly on giving voice to the Pentecostal Indian actors in this history in order to fill in the gaps on a group of modern Pentecostal believers that was almost never written about in the histories of the movement.

I have rooted this work in American religious history, as well as Native American history and the history of American Pentecostalism. The majority of the sources come from the Assemblies of God archives: chiefly ministerial files, Pentecostal periodicals, letters, tracts, meeting minutes, and self-published autobiographies.

Dedication

For my mom, Yolanda L. Tarango, who gave me the love of reading and history.

For my dad, Jesus Tarango Jr., who always believed in me.

For my brother, Jesus Tarango III, who kept me grounded.

For my nephew, Jordan W. Tarango, who was my biggest cheerleader.

And for my dog Chloe and my cat Milo, who remained the best dog and cat ever.

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1. Introduction: Native Peoples and the Missionary Experiment

Later while preaching that meeting I received from God what I had been waiting to hear. He came to me, confirming His call upon my life, in a vivid visitation of His presence. “Now is the time for you to take the Gospel to the American Indians,” He said. “You know now where they are. Go home and prepare yourself. Tell your husband and your church, and I will make the way plain for you.” With this commission from the Lord, an intense love for American Indians flooded my soul. Now that I had a confirmation of my call from God, I knew I must take the next step—a step of faith. – Alta Washburn, white evangelist to American Indians and founder of the American Indian College, circa 1935.¹

I stood among the circular mounds and scattered cedar logs, a small Indian boy in crude Navajo garb, and looked across the small canyon. I shouted into the vast emptiness and heard the echo shouting back. Wonderingly I cried, “Who is talking to me; who dares mock Yel Ha Yah?” So I began my long search for knowledge—not for knowledge alone, but for an understanding of life itself. – Charlie Lee, Navajo evangelist/pastor and founder of the first indigenous church in the Assemblies of God, circa 1930.²

God called Sister Alta Washburn and Brother Charlie Lee. One was a dark-haired, petite Midwestern woman with only a ninth-grade education; the other, a famous young Navajo artist. They came from vastly different places, but during the middle decades of the twentieth century, their lives and work intersected. They were unlikely

¹ Alta Washburn, Autobiography: Trail to the Tribes (Springfield, Mo.: self-published, 1990), 13. Date is an informed estimate based on contextual evidence.

² Charles Lee, “Charlie Lee’s Testimony,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 17 August 1955, 10. Date is an informed estimate based on contextual evidence.

partners in a movement that shaped the largest American Pentecostal denomination, the Assemblies of God (AG).³ As agents of change, their calls to become missionaries to American Indians profoundly altered their lives as well as the lives of others.

In 1918, the first missionaries from the AG set out to work among American Indians. Those missionaries, laboring among Northern California Indians in the Shasta Lake region, pioneered the beginnings of the AG's home missions.⁴ The AG's emphasis on world missions initially overshadowed this project and it took many years before home missions gained momentum among Pentecostal believers. By the early 1950s, however, the AG had established a presence on some reservations and had begun to cultivate an Indian leadership among converts. During the 1960s, that Indian leadership began advocating change in the home missions program, and by the late 1970s and 1980s, American Indian leaders were visible on a national level. The following work focuses on the white missionaries to American Indians, American Indian Pentecostal leaders and the history of home missions within the Assemblies of God.

1.1 Thesis

This dissertation argues that the AG's efforts to establish indigenous churches in its home missions work to American Indians bore two important and largely unanticipated consequences. The first was that it prompted American Indian Pentecostals to forge a new identity: fully Indian and fully Pentecostal. The second was that it

³ I abbreviate the Assemblies of God as the AG throughout this dissertation.

⁴ Clyde Thompson, "Amongst the Indians," The Christian Evangel, 27 July 1918, 5.

prompted white Pentecostals to realize their deepest theological insight: that God’s Spirit fell equally on all peoples, without regard to ethnicity or social standing.

The arguments take a historical form. They show that the intention of Pentecostal missionary work was to establish a healing religion that proclaimed the Gospel and brought hope to the world. Characterized by a belief in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues, healing, and the supernatural guidance of God in one’s life, Pentecostalism offered a version of Christianity that deeply personalized and individualized religious experience. The belief that God cared about individuals and responded to particular needs applied to people living in different cultures as well. The AG affirmed the indigenous principle—that newly evangelized peoples should be encouraged to work toward self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating churches. By establishing indigenous churches, the AG hoped to root Christianity within the cultures and practices of the missionized.⁵

Yet for the AG, realizing the goal of indigenous churches proved to be a long and painful struggle—especially in home missions. Working-class white Americans dominated the ranks of early Pentecostal missionaries, usually hailing from the Midwest or the South. Minimally educated, few white missionaries boasted Bible school degrees

⁵ For a short history of the theology behind the indigenous principle in AG world missions, see Gary McGee, “Assemblies of God Mission Theology: A Historical Perspective,” International Bulletin of Missionary Research 10:4 (Oct. 1986): 166-169. The most famous proponent of the indigenous principle (and the person who gave the term its specific name) was Brother Charlie Lee’s teacher at CBI: Latin American missiologist Melvin Hodges. Hodges published several books on the theology and application of the indigenous principle, including The Indigenous Church and the Missionary: A Sequel to the Indigenous Church (South Pasadena: W. Carey Library, 1978), and A Theology of the Church and its Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1997).

or any other form of higher education.⁶ These early missionaries went to reservations with little understanding of Indian culture or life and many carried the baggage of white paternalism. Some were loath to give converts any form of power within the individual missions. Allowing Indian missionaries and clergy control over their own churches and acknowledging that God could work within Indian culture proved easier in theory than in practice.

Yet, this practice slowly changed. By the 1950s, missionary work among American Indians gained momentum and by the 1960s, a distinct American Indian leadership had emerged. That Indian leadership pushed for the establishment of an all-Indian Bible College and for voting rights on the governing councils of the AG. By 2007, they had achieved both goals, and the AG had established 190 churches or missions among them. American Indians currently make up 1.5 percent of the overall AG population.⁷ This number is in line with the overall percentage of Native peoples in the U.S., which the U.S. Census reports to be 1.5 percent.⁸

Indian Pentecostals' struggle for the indigenous principle so defined them that it became, in a sense, the practice that helped them realize what it meant to be Native and Pentecostal. They rooted their method in a distinctly realized Pentecostal theology—the indigenous principle—which allowed them to push for more Native autonomy within the

⁶ See Appendix A, which contains basic information about a selection of both white and Native AG missionaries.

⁷ John Maracle, Phone Interview, 1 August 2007. Percentage confirmed by the official AG statistician, Sherry Doty.

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, We the People: American Indians and Alaska Natives in the United States (Washington, D.C.: Dept. of Commerce, 2000).

AG. Although Pentecostalism changed American Indian converts, they also changed the AG. These were not people who passively converted, embraced Pentecostalism, and followed the lead of the AG. Instead, they actively engaged the AG and carved out autonomous space within the denomination.

Indian Pentecostals were crucial actors within the AG. When the AG dragged its feet in the building of a Bible college to train its Indian pastors, a sympathetic white missionary named Alta Washburn built one with the support of both Indian leadership and like-minded white missionaries. When white missionaries failed to actualize the indigenous principle in Indian congregations, a maverick Navajo preacher named Charlie Lee took control of his church in order to lead by example. When the AG gave Indians their own national Indian representative but denied the position power, financial backing, or voting rights, the men who inhabited the position pushed for tangible power. In the summer of 2007, the current National Native American Representative, a Mohawk named John Maracle, became the first American Indian elected to a seat on the AG Executive Presbytery. Without the work of its Native leadership, the AG likely would not have slowly begun to move forward in realizing its goal of the indigenous principle in home missions.

1.2 Historiography of Missions/Method

The academic study of American Indian missions is fraught with analytical and evaluative dilemmas. Works on missionary history fall into three major categories. The first includes scholars who try to remain uncritical and simply focus on recording the

history of missionaries.⁹ The second includes those who paint the missionaries in hagiographic terms as champions of the good and righteous.¹⁰ The third group is deeply critical of missionaries and their intent.¹¹

The scholar George Tinker represents the third camp. Surveying the dismal record of missionary encounters with native peoples, Tinker concludes: “Christian missionaries—of all denominations working among American Indian nations—were partners in genocide.”¹² He points to ample evidence. Since the initial contact with European settlers and explorers, American Indians have contended with a variety of Christian missionaries both Catholic and Protestant. Many of these missionaries tried to stamp out what they considered “heathenism.”¹³ Although most missionaries came with the best of intentions, their work often resulted in the destruction of Native cultures and beliefs.

⁹ Some examples of this line of thought include: Ruth Tucker, Guardians of the Great Commission: The Story of Women in Modern Mission (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1988). For another example, see Henry Warner Bowden, American Indians and Christian Missions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

¹⁰ Missionary histories that border on the hagiographic were often written by scholars within the denomination, or in the case of Catholic missionaries, fellow brothers or sisters from their order. For one Protestant example (Lutheran), see Gerhard M. Schmutter, Tomahawk and Cross: Lutheran Missionaries among the Northern Plains Tribes, 1858-1866 (Sioux Falls: Augustana College, 1989).

¹¹ One of the most famous critics of missionaries was the historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. For a short example of his unforgiving example of missionaries as cultural imperialists see, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., “The Missionary Enterprise and Theories of Imperialism,” in The Missionary Enterprise in China and America, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 336-373.

¹² George Tinker, Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 4. Despite his outcry against missionaries, Tinker was a Lutheran minister.

¹³ See Dana Robert, “From Mission to Beyond Missions: The Historiography of American Protestant Foreign Missions Since World War II,” New Directions in American Religious History, eds. Harry S. Stout and D.G. Hart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 362-393.

Cultural destruction occurred as the result of unintended actions, such as the spreading of diseases, and clearly intentional, if ill-informed, actions, such as the creation of the federal boarding school system. Some missionaries, though not all, pushed for removal, the reservation system, and the allotment of reservation land. Many early missionaries believed that through Christianization, American Indians would become more like whites of European ancestry. Others worked hand in hand with the federal government to ban traditional dances or rituals. Tinker comes down hard on white missionaries, but he argues that his reaction is a correction to the other pole of missionary history—the hagiographic, usually Christian account of heroic white missionaries who worked among Indians. His outcry, along with that of other scholars and activists, nudged historians of missionary history to consider new lines of thought.¹⁴

Yet Tinker’s perspective cannot account for people like Charlie Lee—an Indian who *chose* to become Pentecostal. Far from seeing Pentecostalism as a tool for genocide, Lee found in it a place where he could exercise power and forge a Christian identity that did not erase his Indian one. My work, therefore, demands a framework that can acknowledge problems within the AG’s home missions while emphasizing the perspectives of Native peoples who embraced the faith the missionaries preached.

¹⁴ Some scholars have taken issue with the theory of cultural imperialism that Tinker and Schlesinger have promoted. For one example see Andrew Porter, “Cultural Imperialism and Protestant Missionary Enterprise, 1780-1914,” The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 25.3 (Sept. 1997): 367-391. The scholar Ryan Dunch also argues that the term cultural imperialism suffers “from two chief defects: it is inseparable from essentializing discourses of national or cultural authenticity; and it reduces complex interactions to a dichotomy between actor and acted upon, leaving too little place for the agency of the latter.” “Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Cultural Theory, Christian Missions, and Global Modernity,” History and Theory, 41:3 (Oct. 2002): 301-325.

Historian James Axtell offers such a framework. Axtell suggests that historians of mission history take a page from ethnohistory and learn that “each side of the Christian curtain has to be viewed from its own perspective.”¹⁵ He points out that mission historians should move away from either hagiography or “champions of the underdog,” and instead adopt a Native understanding of “success.” This Native view of success would instead focus on “whether the Indians, from their point of view, were successful or not in adopting or adapting Christianity.”¹⁶

Within the last decade, younger scholars of missionary history seized upon and expanded Axtell’s interpretation of success. Such a reading of missionary history requires sensitivity to both sides of the stories—that of the white missionaries and that of the Indians. While recognizing that the missionary encounter with Indians entailed dramatically unequal power relations, these new historians of missionary history stay away from discussions of “good” or “bad” and emphasize how both groups changed, innovated, reacted, and served as agents of cross-cultural exchange.¹⁷ By staying away from the “good/bad” characterization, missionaries and the people that they served become fully realized characters in their own stories and escape caricature, while the Christian faith and traditional Indian faiths are both treated with respect. By combining Axtell’s understanding of success, along with sensitive ethnographic and historical work, scholars have unearthed surprising histories that have enriched Native American history

¹⁵ James Axtell, “Some Thoughts on the Ethnohistory of Missions,” *Ethnohistory* 29 (1982): 36.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ See Dunch, 317-325.

as well as missionary history and have opened new directions for understanding the history of missions to Native peoples.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, new scholars of missionary, religious, and Native American history began to re-examine the issue of American Indians and Christianity. William McLoughlin, in his work on the Baptist missionary Evan Jones to the Cherokee, gave the field one of the most evenhanded and complex portrayals of a white missionary caught up in the social, political, economic, and national turmoil of his era.¹⁸ McLoughlin's book uses Jones's life as a prism to examine the history of the Cherokees and their removal as well as their relationship with Christianity. The result is a nuanced study that complicates how scholars view missionary motivations, Native clergy, and Native Christianity.

Bonnie Sue Lewis's work on Native Presbyterian clergy among the Dakota and Nez Perce people in the latter half of the nineteenth century follows in McLoughlin's footsteps.¹⁹ Lewis argues that Presbyterian Dakotas and Nez Perce people should be considered both Christian and Indian. Lewis thinks that the development of a Native clergy plays the main role in defining this Christian Indian identity, and sets out to counteract a history that she views as too focused on missionary failure. Lewis emphasizes this point in her introduction: "Where Indians became Christian and yet incorporated their cultural and behavioral patterns and constructed institutions and

¹⁸ William McLoughlin, Champions of the Cherokees: Evan and John B. Jones (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

¹⁹ Bonnie Sue Lewis, Creating Christian Indians: Native Clergy in the Presbyterian Church (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).

practices reflecting both identities, there is no story of failure.”²⁰ She draws on Axtell’s definition of success in order to buoy her own argument for Native success in the Presbyterian church, and in doing so opens the door to careful exploration of the role that Native clergy played in constructing a Native Christian identity.

Rachel Wheeler’s comparative study of 18th century Mohican Christians in Congregational and Moravian communities asserts, like Lewis, that Mohicans could be both Native and Christian.²¹ Its great contribution to the field, however, is how the book examines “the shape of Mohican identity as it adapted two distinctive forms of Christianity as well as the shape of Christianity as it was interpreted through the lens of Mohican tradition and Mohican experiences of colonialism.”²² Wheeler and Lewis agree that Native peoples actively formed their own Native-Christian identities.

While there has been a movement toward the idea that Native people can develop a Christian identity and retain their Native one, there are also those who do not agree. The most vocal recent scholar on this front is Kirk Dombrowski.²³ An anthropologist who initially planned to study the politics surrounding political development and Native cultural practices among Alaskan Natives, Dombrowski also discovered that charismatic Christian groups played a role in village life. Dombrowski asserts that Native groups, in order to remain Native, must separate themselves from their culture and American

²⁰ Ibid., xiii.

²¹ Rachel Wheeler, To Live Upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

²² Ibid., 11.

²³ Kirk Dombrowski, Against Culture: Development, Politics and Religion in Indian Alaska (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

culture. This means that “while Protestant churches can become a mainstay of an African American subculture, these same churches have never been seen as part of Native American culture—even in congregations composed entirely of natives and led by a native preacher.”²⁴ This leads him to conclude that Christianity, especially of the Protestant charismatic kind, stands “against Culture.”²⁵ Dombrowski’s argument on religion falters from his lack of nuance among the Christian groups he studies—he lumps evangelicals and charismatics, loosely uses the term Pentecostal, and makes no distinctions between the theology of the churches that belong to denominations and those that are independent. He also displays a lack of understanding of the religious history of the area in connection to its Russian roots and its place in modern America.

Cherokee scholar Andrea Smith takes a different path on the Native and Christian debate.²⁶ Smith’s work on Native Americans and the alliances they have formed with the modern-day Christian Right shows a subtle understanding of the issues involved. Smith points out that Native evangelicals have chosen to engage institutions that are deeply problematic from the more traditional Native point of view, such as the Promise Keepers—but also shows how these engagements create constantly shifting alliances and redefinitions of identity. One of the informative aspects of Smith’s work is that she is happy to step aside and let her findings “trouble” the reader and the scholarly community. She points out in regards to the Christian right that “Native peoples within this movement

²⁴ Ibid., 13.

²⁵ Ibid., 15.

²⁶ Andrea Smith, Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances (Durham, Duke University Press, 2008).

often support Christian imperialism and perform ‘whiteness’ in a manner that undermines Native sovereignty struggles. At the same time, however, they often use the tenets of evangelical faith to undermine white supremacy and support Native nationalism.”²⁷ Her work “challenges the commonly held assumption that Christianization within American Indian communities is equivalent to assimilation.”²⁸ The great strength of Smith’s scholarship is her willingness to live with the complexity of Native religious identity, even when it seems contradictory, difficult, and impossible to understand. She directly challenges historians to begin to move away from the Christian-Indian debate toward understanding how Native peoples constantly shift and articulate religious identity in ways that do not fit in neat categories.

Finally, the last major influential work on Indians and Christianity also urges historians to move toward new approaches in the field of American religious history. In Michael McNally’s work on the re-interpretation of Episcopal hymn singing from the Ojibwe cultural point of view, the author emphasizes that Native Christianity was awash in hybridities.²⁹ He argues that historians who study the field have to learn to live with these hybridities and urges scholars to think of Native traditions as “lifeways rather than religions. That, in turn, will bring us to appreciate the generativity of outward practices in native Christianity.”³⁰ He urges scholars to study religious practice rather than beliefs so they can “make more sophisticated sense of the claim that native traditions, Christianity

²⁷ Ibid., xxxii.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Michael McNally, *Ojibwe Singers: Hymns, Grief, and A Native Culture in Motion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

³⁰ Ibid., 11.

among them, are not religions, but ways of life.”³¹ What interests me most here is McNally’s call to consider practice as one way to gain insight into Native Christian lives—by doing this, he is prompting historians of Native religious history as a whole to begin to utilize some of the tools that the study of American religious history developed in order to understand the everyday lives of believers.³²

With McNally’s call to study religious practices in mind, it might seem that the main mode of practice for Native Pentecostals was found in the gifts of the Holy Spirit—speaking in tongues, healing, and prophecy—or in the musical or bodily forms of Pentecostal worship. While Native Pentecostals most certainly engaged in all of these more common practices, and in distinctly Native ways, I discovered that Native Pentecostals’ constant fight for the indigenous principle became a religious practice too. By promoting and creating indigenous churches and a Bible college to train indigenous pastors, and by demanding a visible national indigenous leader, Native AG Pentecostals formed an identity centered in the struggle for indigenous churches and autonomy within the AG. They took a theology fundamental to Pentecostal missionary work and brought it to life as a form of practice. As scholars Laurie Maffly-Kipp, Mark Valeri and Leigh Schmidt put it, “the exploration of practice, is, at bottom, an examination of the intricate exercises of power, the procedures of enforcement, the spaces of negotiation, as well as

³¹ Ibid., 13.

³² For more on practice within the study of American Protestantism, see Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, Leigh E. Schmidt and Mark Valeri, eds. Practicing Protestants: Histories of Christian Life in America 1630-1965 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), esp. the intro. and chap. 4.

the subtle tactics of resistance.”³³ This study constructs a narrative of the Native Pentecostal search for power and autonomy within the denominational structures of the AG—and of how activism on the basis of the indigenous principle became a mode of resistance to ethnocentrism and paternalism. For Native Pentecostals, the indigenous principle was at the very core of their being. It was through the indigenous principle that they lived out their identities. In short, the constant push to realize the indigenous principle in AG missionary work was the practice that defined the identities of Pentecostal Indians.

My work utilizes the methods and approaches of several of these scholars. I choose to focus on a specific denomination’s Native leaders, mainly because that is what the sources reveal. In my approach to the white AG missionaries, I try to understand them as people who were not simply agents of imperialism or assimilation, but rather as fully realized individuals. I hope that in upending the traditional narrative of the AG’s missionary work (one that tends to focus on foreign rather than home missions), I show how Native people carved out their own area of resistance within a white-run denomination. I seek to “trouble” (a word that Smith is fond of using) how Native Christianity is understood—it can indeed exist in a traditionally politically and theologically conservative denomination. Finally, I examine how Native peoples took the Pentecostal theology of missions and made it into a way of life, a rallying call for change, and the key component of their Pentecostal Indian identity. American Indians within the

³³ Ibid., 3.

AG forged their religious identity in struggle and resistance. They demanded that their white counterparts hear them, they innovated, they carved out autonomy, and they held the AG to its Pentecostal ideals. The indigenous principle, as Native Pentecostals came to live it, was distinctly Native, for it demanded that Indian people enjoy an autonomous space and control over their religious destinies within the AG. It was distinctly Pentecostal in the methods that they used to carry out the fight.

1.3 Problems of the Supernatural

Pentecostals expected contact with the supernatural. According to historian Grant Wacker, a “longing for direct contact with the divine in a number of ways”³⁴ characterizes Pentecostalism. The movement’s emphasis on healing, speaking in tongues, prophecy, and a personal relationship with God has meant believers experience God as present in their everyday lives. Accounts of divine revelation and miraculous healings permeate this study, and those descriptions of the supernatural create another analytical dilemma for my work.

I take Pentecostal (both white and Indian) beliefs seriously as expressions of an authentic religious experience. The anthropologist Glenn Hinson points out that Pentecostal believers’ lives revolved around the experiences of the divine, which heavily influence how they related to each other. He states: “To ignore these matters is to deny the saints’ experiential world and thus to craft a portrait that speaks more to academic

³⁴ Grant Wacker, Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 12.

understandings than the lived reality of believers.”³⁵ Understanding the lived reality of believers in this history is crucial, because without it, we run the risk of losing large portions of the story.

For this reason, I straightforwardly present the believers’ explanations of the miraculous. Most often, the miraculous appears in the forms of physical healing, but it also occurs in other ways, such as Alta Washburn’s revelations from God. (According to her autobiography, God spoke to her often.) In the case of Rodger Cree, he experienced a vision of an Indian woman crying out in hunger and pain that led him to his first missionary posting in the Hudson Bay region of Canada.³⁶ Pentecostal history requires that I capture how Pentecostals related to the divine—how the Holy Spirit was ever-present in their lives. If I removed the miraculous and divine from this story, I would remove much of the richness and uniqueness of the Pentecostal experience, which differentiated Pentecostals from other Christian groups: it was an experience that touched all the senses and one that “epitomized the uninhibited expression of raw religious emotion.”³⁷

My acceptance, however, of Pentecostal explanations of the miraculous does not mean that I do not search for other forms of understanding in the sources. Most AG missionaries (both white and Indian) ascribed the motivations behind their work to God’s will and the revelations of Holy Spirit. That they believed this does not mean that, as a

³⁵ Glenn Hinson, Fire In My Bones: Transcendence and the Holy Spirit in African American Gospel (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 3.

³⁶ Rodger Cree, Interview, Springfield, Mo., 8 August 2006.

³⁷ Wacker, 99.

historian, I cannot tease out other motivations revealed by the sources. The key to telling a history that is meaningful to both believers and historians is to elucidate underlying motivations while respecting Pentecostals' own interpretations of their actions. Native and white Pentecostal believers reported miracles throughout the sources. The importance lies not in understanding whether the miracles *actually* happened, but in understanding *how* the miraculous enriches the historical underpinnings of the AG's mission history. In other words, I seek to understand what roles the miraculous and the divine played in the everyday, mundane lives of both Indian and white missionaries.

The issue of the miraculous is one of the key factors that helps explain why Pentecostal Christianity took hold among some Indian populations. First of all, for some Indians, Pentecostalism filled a need. Traditional Indian religions were rich in their variety, yet they did exhibit some commonalities. Almost all traditional Indian religions included both physical and spiritual healing.³⁸ The same should be said for Pentecostalism, which emphasized not only bodily healing from illness or hurt, but also spiritual healing from the mental terrors of life. Historians of Pentecostalism in Latin America observe a similar connection—Pentecostal healing and belief helped people overcome alcohol and gambling problems and stabilized the family structure.³⁹ North American Pentecostal Indians fit into this same pattern. Pentecostal healing gave them a

³⁸ For a brief and basic overview of Native American traditional belief, see Lawrence E. Sullivan, ed., Native American Religions: North America (New York: MacMillian Publishing Company, 1989), chap. 1.

³⁹ See Elizabeth Brusco, The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

way to cope with the hardships of reservation life, such as substance abuse, physical abuse, poverty, and the breakdown of the traditional family structure.

Along with healing, Pentecostalism offered closeness to the divine. In Pentecostalism God was ever-present and personal, and he revealed himself in various ways—through prophecy, visions, and prayer. Again, as with the important role of healing in Native traditions, vision quests or revelations were common in traditional Indian religions.⁴⁰ Indian evangelists often spoke about points of revelation or visions that they experienced, such as Rodger Cree’s observation that a ball of fire came down upon his head when he first started speaking in tongues or Charlie Lee’s search for God on the top of a mesa while herding sheep.⁴¹ Such encounters with the divine were common in Native traditions, but they understood these examples within a Christian context. Thus, divine experiences and healing powers, essential features of Pentecostalism, likely made it an attractive form of Christianity for American Indians, because it absorbed already familiar forms of religious practice.

1.4 Sources

The primary sources that I use in this work largely come from the Assemblies of God archives at the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center in Springfield, Missouri. I amassed a variety of materials including autobiographies, fund-raising letters, official letters, official missionary files, surveys, random minutes from a variety of planning meetings and the General Council minutes. I interviewed one of the last missionaries

⁴⁰ See Sullivan, chap. 1.

⁴¹ Rodger Cree, Interview; Lee, 10.

from the first generation of Native leaders, Brother Rodger Cree, as well as the former editor of the *Pentecostal Evangel*, the late Sister Ruth Lyon. I have also interviewed and remained in contact with the current Native American Representative, Brother John Maracle. Yet, even with these sources, this project would not have been possible without the archived articles of the *Pentecostal Evangel* (*PE*).

Anyone who studies American Pentecostalism knows the importance of periodical sources in the reconstruction of its history. The flagship periodical of the AG, the *PE* is published weekly and covers a wide variety of AG news while also serving as an evangelistic tool. Because the other sources have gaps and are especially likely to omit names and dates, I relied on the *PE* to reconstruct a timeline of important people and events in the history of the home missions to American Indians. The *PE* also captured the voices of Native leaders, now long gone, because it was the main platform from which they could speak to a general Pentecostal audience. Native leaders often published articles in the *PE*, including testimonials as well as their hopes for the success of the AG missions program.⁴²

Along with providing a timeline and an outline of important events, the *PE* is useful because the reporters wrote in an accessible, testimonial manner. This orientation toward means that Native Pentecostal voices are showcased in its pages, because the AG

⁴² Several prominent scholars of Pentecostalism have heavily leaned on periodicals for their studies. See, for example, Wacker, *Heaven Below* and Edith Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

had a vested interest in sharing these stories as evangelistic tools.⁴³ The emphasis on egalitarianism within Pentecostalism meant that everyday white Pentecostals wanted to hear the voices of American Indian Pentecostals, and this interest clearly created enough demand among the readership that the *PE* paid attention.

Of course, there are potential pitfalls when using the *PE* as a source. As the official mouthpiece of the AG, the *PE* presented only accounts approved by denominational leadership—that usually meant accounts favorable to the AG. Testimonials filled the pages of the *PE*, but no apostate stories appeared. This bias means that one has to read carefully for any signs of discontent among missionaries and Pentecostal Indians. Their opinions, when given, always appear edited.⁴⁴ It is also important to remember that Pentecostals rarely take credit for their actions; they always give credit to God. Yet careful reading between the lines, coupled with the information from the other sources, fleshes out a fuller story.⁴⁵

In this dissertation, I wrestle with the same problem that many other works of Native American studies have confronted: whites who were interacting with American

⁴³ Robert Orsi discusses the import of published testimonials in the preface of his book. *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

⁴⁴ During the rapid growth of home missions to American Indians (mid-1950s- 1970s), the *PE*'s home missions editor was Sister Ruth Lyon, a former missionary to the Chippewa who held a great interest in missions to American Indians. Before she became editor, Sister Lyon served as a reporter on the home missions front, and she wrote many of the articles on American Indian missions in the *PE*. Thus, she controlled much of the flow of information on home missions. I met with Sister Lyon in August of 2006 in Springfield, Missouri, and she made it clear that she had dedicated her life to bringing publicity to the AG's missions to American Indians. One needs to remember, however, that the AG employed her to bring out the most positive sides of the home missions story. In the interview, she also made it very clear that she believed in the indigenous principle and supported the American Indian leadership within the AG. Sister Lyon passed away before I was able to interview her again.

⁴⁵ The problem of sources and how Pentecostals were loath to attribute their actions to anything other than the inspiration of God is discussed in the introduction to Wacker's *Heaven Below*.

Indians recorded the majority of the information. This problem repeats itself in missionary studies. How does a historian accurately gauge the Native story through white sources? Although the white Pentecostal elite controlled the *PE*, fortunately it also published the writing of Indian Pentecostals. I have also benefited from modern-day Indian Pentecostal leaders who were willing to share their stories with me and by testimonials, autobiographies, and the letters of some past leaders. So, although many of the sources are filtered, I have sifted through them while keeping in mind my priority to privilege voices of American Indian Pentecostals. I focus mainly on the Indian leaders within the AG because they were the Pentecostal Indians who were present in the sources. Whenever possible, I try to bring out the voices of the Pentecostal Indian laity, but those sources in the literature remain few.⁴⁶

One problem that presented itself in this study was the lack of supporting secondary sources within the field of missions to American Indians in the post-World War II era. With the exception of Smith's work, almost no scholarship exists on modern American Indian evangelical groups. Meanwhile, we have seen a resurgence of study in the field of modern foreign evangelical missions at the turn of the twenty-first century.⁴⁷ Modern Native American missions remains largely overlooked because Native American studies scholars have been concerned with re-creating the narrative of Native American studies and have focused on issues such as Red Power, gender, literature, political and

⁴⁶ Other historians have wrestled with this problem. Indeed, it is common in Native American Missionary studies, and in Native American studies overall. One example of how to approach the source problem is offered by James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), Introduction.

⁴⁷ See Robert, "From Missions to Mission," 362-393.

economic history. Missionary history, as we will see in the following pages, was a painful history and fraught with scholarly pitfalls. New histories have appeared such as Wheeler's work on Moravian Indians in the seventeenth century, but the majority of them consider groups that are not from the modern period.

Working with groups of people who remain alive and who continue negotiating complicated religious identities presents a sticky problem. Smith grapples with this problem in her work: when scholars step into modern religious communities to study them, they inevitably become tied to those communities. This is, perhaps, the main reason that scholars do not work on modern Native missionary history—it raises difficult questions of churches, Native people, and the scholars themselves. Even though this history relies heavily on archival sources, I remain well aware that I have written a history that Native Pentecostals themselves might read, and that the AG will notice. For that reason I strive for both fairness and historical accuracy. I am not a Pentecostal or a registered American Indian, but as a Catholic and Mexican-American (with significant indigenous roots south of the border), I am as concerned as AG Indians with the need for a fair and accurate picture of a marginalized religious culture. I undertook this study mainly for a scholarly reason, but there were also personal ones: from a young age my mother and father taught me that the true history of this country is one that must include all its peoples. In this work, I have tried to add my own small contribution to that goal.

1.5 Significance

Although Pentecostal Indians represent a small group within the AG, their story is important within the greater study of American religion and American Indian studies.

This study challenges the idea that when Indians converted to Christianity, they stopped being Indians.⁴⁸ Rather, Pentecostal Indians within the AG found that their conversion helped them form a *new* identity, one that was solidly Pentecostal while also deeply rooted in Indian culture.⁴⁹ In Pentecostalism, American Indians found a form of faith that allowed them to face their harshest problems as well as a spiritual home where they could exercise autonomy and power. In short, Pentecostal Indians *chose* the “Jesus Way” and made it work for them.

My study touches on significant issues of race, gender, and cross-cultural contact. I consider race and ethnic identity as I explore what it meant to be an Indian Christian, as well as the tensions that eventually surfaced between white and Indian missionaries within the AG. In addition to creating a complementary racial and ethnic identity, Pentecostal Indians navigated the difficulties of being a minority in an overwhelmingly white denomination. As a result, they had to confront their own prejudices against the white man and the “white man’s religion,” as well as the prejudices of their white Pentecostal brothers and sisters. Yet many found support among that same cohort of white members of the AG, thus proving that the relations between the two groups cannot be easily categorized.

⁴⁸ For one example of an interpretation of a Christian Indian, see Donald Parman, “J.C. Morgan: Navajo Apostle of Assimilation,” Prologue : The Journal of the National Archives, 4 (Summer 1979): 83-96.

⁴⁹ Native historian James Treat also takes issue with the idea that one cannot be both a Christian and an Indian. He states: “to disregard Indian Christians, either as Indians, or as Christians, is to deny their human agency, their religious independence, and—ultimately—their very lives.” For more on Treat’s understanding of an Indian Christian see the introduction to James Treat, ed., Native and Christian (New York: Routledge, 1995), esp. 10.

My work also touches on gender. Notably, the most prominent white supporter of the Native clergy was a woman, but the Native clergy was predominantly male. Alta Washburn's place in this history is pivotal; without her, the American Indian Bible Institute (now the American Indian College) would not have become a reality. Pentecostalism has allowed women prophetic leadership since its inception, although women always gained more latitude if they worked as missionaries. Few women within the AG found success as domestic pastors.⁵⁰ Although the AG leadership was (and still is) largely male, women have taken on a variety of roles, including those of pastor and missionary.⁵¹ In some respects, Sister Washburn's place in this history is unsurprising because the mission field (both in home and world missions) had long offered American women a variety of leadership roles.⁵² Yet she is extraordinary for the grit and perseverance that she displayed. In her autobiography Sister Washburn does not take much of the credit for her work—like most Pentecostals, she gives the glory to God. She exhibited some of the very best traits of Pentecostalism: pragmatism, a deep concern for

⁵⁰ Margaret M. Poloma, The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 110.

⁵¹ Most of the data I have collected on the gender breakdown among AG missionaries (both white and Native) comes from the AG's deceased ministers files. The majority of white missionaries were married men. Their wives often helped with their missionary work, but the *PE* rarely mentions them. A notable exception to this rule is Sister Washburn, who was married, and is often referred to by name in the *PE*. There were single female missionaries on the home missions front such as Sister Virginia Kridler—they often evangelized in pairs. Among Native leaders, the numbers were significantly skewed toward men. All of the male Native missionaries were married and occasionally their wives appear in the *PE*, but other than that, the only Native female missionary that I have been able to confirm is Hilda Cree, sister of Rodger Cree. Charlie Lee, George Effman and John McPherson were all married to white women.

⁵² For more information on women and gender roles in missionary history, see, Dana L. Robert, American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 240-254.

the poor and voiceless, willingness to take on leadership, and a stubborn drive to do the best she could for the people that she served.

Turning to cross-cultural contact, I argue that American Indians were not simply passive objects of the AG's missionary work. Some histories of missionary work among American Indians have focused on the destruction of cultures, resistance to missionary work, or passive reception of Christianity.⁵³ It is true that those factors are a part of missionary history, but they do not accurately represent the active role American Indians took in their own development as Christian Indians. Such an approach also shows the fact that American Indians could actively change the course of a Christian denomination. In the recent past, the prevailing understanding has been that it was Christianity that irrevocably changed and damaged Native cultures, but I suggest that missionary cross-cultural exchange led not only to change (conversion) among the missionized Indians, but also to significant changes within the AG. In this way, this dissertation is a study of cross-cultural contact within the history of American religion. It shows how a denomination dealt with issues of diversity, and it expands the history of diversity in American Pentecostalism beyond the conventional black/white/brown triad.

Placing this history in its geographical context is also essential. Rather than impose arbitrary boundaries, I follow the AG's lead: their missionary project was national in scope, scattered among reservations and urban centers of Indian culture.

⁵³ Both McNally and Lewis take issue with the idea that American Indian Christians were simply passive receptors of Christianity. See, McNally, esp. the introduction, and Lewis, esp. chap. 7. For an example of how American Indians used their identity as Christians and commitments to the local Episcopal missions as strategic political alliances see, Rebecca Kugal, To Be the Main Leaders of Our People: A History of Minnesota Ojibwe Politics, 1825-1898 (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998).

Although plenty of AG missionaries appeared in other parts of the country, the AG's evangelistic efforts became especially strong in the American Southwest (including California), and parts of the Northeast.⁵⁴ Pentecostalism flourished in these areas because of strong leadership by white and Native missionaries with a vision. For this reason, my work concentrates on these regions and the people who worked in them. I do not include the AG's work among the Eskimo and Inuit peoples of Canada and Alaska because their story is quite different from that of their Native brothers and sisters to the south. A few Native missionaries who are Canadian by birth do cross over into this story, but they come from the Mohawk tribe and acted as important leaders whose work gave them considerable power and influence among Indians in United States. I also do not include the history of missionary work among the Lumbee people of North Carolina. Even though AG missionary work among them flourished, their history is distinct from that of other Native peoples in the United States because of the heavy influence of the southern African American Holiness tradition, their tri-racial background, and their lack of federal recognition as a tribe.

All of the people in this work hail from recent history. Most of the first generation of Native and white missionaries have died, but in 2009, a few, like Mohawk evangelist Rodger Cree, continued to work actively in churches. In 2009, AG missionary efforts to American Indians continued: this is very much a living history and a dynamic history, one that will continue to shape the trajectory of the AG as well as the lives of American

⁵⁴ Pentecostalism was most prominent in the following tribes: Apache, Navajo, Pima, Papago, California Mission Indians, urban Los Angeles Indians, Mohawk and Lumbee.

Indian Pentecostals. What I offer here is by no means “complete,” but rather an interpretation of the home missions’ history and an examination of its continuing place in the American religious landscape.

Finally, I have a few thoughts on the use of specific language in this work. I chose to use the terms “American Indian” and “Indian” because they are the terms used by the sources, and to use another term would be jarring to the narrative structure of this dissertation. When talking about the non-white actors in this dissertation I often switch back and forth between “Native” and “Indian.” Wherever possible, I give the tribal designation of the Native actors. In the case of the Tohono O’ Odham tribe of southern Arizona, I use the other tribal name “Papago” in order to stay in synchrony with the sources. Finally, when I use the designation “Pentecostal Indians” it is important to remember that I am specifically referring to those within the AG. Other Native Pentecostal, charismatic, and evangelical believers who do not belong to the AG exist, but this history refers only to those who identify with the AG.

I use the designation “brother” and “sister” when referring to both the white and Native Pentecostal actors in this history to remain consistent with the sources and to stress the communal, egalitarian Pentecostal ethos—one that in theory extended beyond markers of race or social status. When I can, I give the first names of all actors in this story, but often the sources give only the last names. For female missionaries, this is especially true—they usually were only identified by their husbands’ names in the *PE* and typically lacked a missionary file if they were appointed to work alongside their husbands. In those cases, I identify the missionary only as “Sister” with her last name.

When referring to God in this dissertation, I used the gender pronoun “he” to remain consistent with the sources. I also use the terms “restorationist” and “primitivist” interchangeably in this dissertation for reasons that are outlined in footnote 5 of Chapter 2.

1.6 Overview

My dissertation is both chronological and thematic. Each chapter focuses on a decade and on the particular struggles between the AG and Pentecostal Indians during that period.

In Chapter 1, I lay the groundwork for the dissertation by presenting Pentecostal beginnings and the birth of the Assemblies of God. I also address the genesis of both world and home missions, the structure and goals of the home missions department, and the theology behind the indigenous principle. The chapter closes with a discussion of the earliest missions to American Indians (pre-1950), and how they set the stage for later missionary work.

Chapter 2 focuses on the 1950s and the role that white missionaries played in the home missions project to American Indians. The chapter covers missionaries’ activities such as church building, hosting revivals, and cultivating indigenous leadership. I also give a brief overview of Christian missionary work in the U.S. and situate the AG work in that context. I highlight how white missionaries viewed healing and traditional Indian religion in order to underscore their differences from native missionaries. The problem of missionary paternalism and ethnocentrism is paramount, and this chapter shows how during the 1950s it was a major impediment in white missionary-Native encounters.

Chapter 3 looks at Native missionaries from the 1950s and 1960s and how they slowly began to shape and influence the AG missionary project to their people. This chapter explores Native leadership and its different approach to healing and traditional religion. I argue that once Indians chose conversion, they found their own autonomy and voice within the AG missions system and began to cultivate a new identity centered on the indigenous principle—one that was both Indian and Pentecostal.

Chapter 4 focuses on Alta Washburn and Charlie Lee and their work with the American Indian Bible Institute and the indigenous church movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Their examples forced the AG to confront its indigenous principle ideal. Alta Washburn single-handedly built the first all-Indian Bible College in order to cultivate Pentecostal Indian leaders even though the AG did not initially approve. Her struggle to push forward what she believed was the plan of God forms the centerpiece. The chapter closes with a look at Lee and his work with his indigenous church on the Navajo reservation in Shiprock, New Mexico, and discusses how his Navajo background catalyzed his belief in the indigenous principle. Without the work of Lee or Washburn, the AG might not have been open to further change.

Chapter 5 begins in the late 1970s and brings the story to the present. It focuses on the birth of the National American Indian Representative position and American Indians' struggle for power. When the AG officially announced the position, it lacked both funding and voting rights. The American Indian leadership fought for decades to obtain both of these privileges. I argue that despite a nearly impossible fight for recognition and power, American Indian Pentecostals continued to carve out an official

place within the AG, and that in their struggle they defined themselves as Indian and Pentecostal.

In the conclusion, I focus on the problems Indian Pentecostals faced in the twentieth century and what this dissertation reveals about missionary history, American religious history and modern American Indian history. Here, I argue that we can understand the Native struggle for the indigenous principle presented in the previous five chapters as a form of Christian practice—a way of living out a theological ideal. I do not present a definitive and closed story in the conclusion, but rather I offer an interpretive framework for future historical studies.

Finally, I turn back to the opening quotations in this introduction. Both address a personal, supernatural faith. One is a young woman's confirmation of a calling from God; the other is a little boy's quest for the truth. Both are recounted from the vantage point of later life. Their belief in the prospect of an indigenous church and a Christ that could heal all—red or white—propelled them forward into extraordinary lives that they could not have foreseen. Alta Washburn and Charlie Lee were both in many ways ordinary Americans, living ordinary lives of belief, pain, and toil. Yet they showed that through faith, hard work, pragmatism, and sheer force of will, ordinary Americans could shape the course of something much greater than themselves and change the course of a major American religious movement.

2. Chapter 1: Roots of the Assemblies of God and Its Home Missions to American Indians

In 1906, during the great Pentecostal revival at the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles, California, scores of believers received the gift of tongues. They thought that they were actually speaking the language of a foreign land and therefore could evangelize foreign peoples. Caught up in the fervor of the moment, many early Pentecostal believers traveled overseas and tried to use their newfound gift for spreading the gospel. *The Apostolic Faith*, the periodical that documented the great revival, reported this phenomenon.

A band of three missionaries, Bro. Andrew Johnson and Sisters Louise Condit and Lucy M. Leatherman, who have been baptized with the Holy Ghost and received the gift of languages, have left for Jerusalem... Bro. Johnson has received seven different languages, one of which is Arabic. Sister Leatherman speaks the Turkish language...¹

These three missionaries constituted only a few of the many believers who thought that God had sent the gift of tongues for the purpose of world evangelization. Eventually, however, believers understood the gift of tongues to be something other than the gift of an actual language. Yet early Pentecostal believers remained undeterred. In their eyes, even if God had not given them the ability to speak foreign languages, God or the Holy

¹Author Unknown, "Missionaries to Jerusalem," *The Apostolic Faith*, 1 (1906): 4. Reprinted by Together in Harvest Publications, Foley, AL, 1997.

Spirit had still given them a new and exciting faith to proclaim and they fanned out across the United States and the globe to spread the word of revival and Pentecost.

As a denomination, the Assemblies of God came into being partly if not largely because of the Pentecostal missionary impulse.² The early years following Azusa Street were chaotic and decentralized, with believers moving from revival to revival, congregation to congregation. Missionaries with neither formal ties to a congregation nor financial support launched themselves on faith missions.³ As the tumult continued into the second decade of the twentieth century, a group of Pentecostal leaders decided to come together to bring order to their world. Thus, in 1914, the Assemblies of God was established, and in the decade following, they put in place the general structure of the denomination in order to spread the Gospel a more most efficient way.

While the main missionary emphasis focused on foreign lands, a venture that Protestant America knew well, the AG also addressed the United States.⁴ Missions to Hispanics, African Americans, and American Indians followed closely upon the establishment of foreign missions. The first AG mission to American Indians took place in 1918, when a Pentecostal couple decided to spread the Gospel among them in Northern California.⁵ The domestic missionary impulse added to the need for

²Gary McGee, This Gospel Shall Be Preached: A History and Theology of Assemblies of God Foreign Missions to 1959 (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 2003), 13-17.

³ A faith mission was a mission undertaken with no guaranteed institutional financial support from a denomination or sending board. Missionaries depended on prayer, personal fundraising and providence in order to raise the money needed not only to fund the mission, but also to pay themselves and support their families.

⁴ For more on the foreign missionary work of early Pentecostalism, see Allan Anderson, Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2007).

⁵Author Unknown, "Amongst the Indians," The Christian Evangel, 27 July 1918, 5.

organization. The AG established a Home Missions Department in 1937 to encourage successful missions to specific ethnic groups in the United States.

Historians have written much on global Pentecostalism and its emphasis on world missions but little on the American home missions experience. Few historians seem aware that the AG features a long history of missions to American Indians. To be sure, at the turn of the twentieth century, American Indians were no strangers to Christian missionaries. By the time Pentecostalism appeared on the reservations, American Indians had experienced several centuries of interaction with Christian missionaries. Those missionaries, especially Protestant ones, had been deeply influential in the shaping of federal Indian policy, including shaping the policies surrounding the creation of reservations and the allotment of those reservations in the late nineteenth century. Missionaries supported the building of boarding schools, both federal and religious, to Christianize Native children, and encouraged adult Indians to give up their “heathen ways” so that they could become like white Americans.⁶ By the early twentieth century, American Indians were wary of Christian missionaries and often resisted them in the hope of preserving their cultures. In this climate, Pentecostal missionaries arrived on the reservations.⁷

⁶ Government boarding schools, while ostensibly secular, sought to inculcate the values of white Protestant America in their Native students in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Former Christian missionaries and denominational workers often ran them. While private religious boarding schools were more openly religious, government schools also had religious undertones. For a brief overview of the problematic history of Indian boarding schools, see David Wallace Adams, Education For Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1925 (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1997).

⁷ For more on Christian reformers shaped Indian policy, see Francis Paul Prucha, American Indian Policy In Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indians 1865-1900 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976).

This dissertation tells the story of the AG's home missions program to American Indians, how American Indian converts rose to leadership positions, and how those leaders developed a Pentecostal identity and forced the AG to embrace its own deepest impulses about egalitarianism. While the focus of this work is the story of the American Indians who were shaped by, and who shaped, the Assemblies of God, we must consider the structure and history of the denomination before the issues of racial, cultural, and religious identity can be explored. In order to provide a working overview of AG history and the theology that led to the evangelization of American Indians, I divide this first chapter into four sections. First, the chapter considers the earliest years of Pentecostalism, its Holiness and Higher Life beginnings, and its explosion onto the American scene at Azusa Street. The birth of the Assemblies of God and the establishment and organization of its Foreign and Home Missions Departments follows. The chapter continues by examining the early theology behind the indigenous principle—the Pauline ideal that churches should be rooted in the culture of the missionized. The indigenous principle is the key to understanding this dissertation. It represents the theology that Indian Pentecostal leaders utilized to argue for their greater involvement in the AG. The chapter closes by tracing the beginnings of home missions to American Indians in the years 1918-1950, before large numbers of white evangelists arrived on the reservations.

These four sections explore the beginnings of the AG's main difficulty during the early decades of the twentieth century: the juxtaposition of Pentecostal ideals about indigenization with the need for denominational organization. These ideals resulted in a strong American Indian leadership in the AG during the middle to late decades of the

twentieth century, but the realities of denominational organization and personnel—both presumptively paternalistic toward Indians, resulted in white control, a problem that ran counter to indigenizing church ideals from the 1950s to the 1980s. The essential problem that the AG faced in its missions to American Indians emerges: could the AG stay true to its roots and belief in the power of the Holy Spirit and allow the Gospel to empower all peoples, regardless of race or nationality? Could it allow indigenous people real, tangible autonomy and power? Accomplishing this goal would have required a truly radical departure from the history of Christian missions to American Indians. The result is a complicated story of a denomination steeped in religious idealism, but also shaped by its own time and place. Thus, the indigenous principle did not trump the deeply rooted ethnocentrism and paternalism within the AG, but it gave Native Pentecostals a tool with which to hold the denomination accountable. White AG missionaries thought their work of spreading the Gospel lay at the heart of their identities as Pentecostals, but it was their American Indian converts that helped save the soul of the denomination by demanding that it live up to its foundational and most cherished beliefs.

2.1 The Pre-Pentecostal Foundations

In September 1906, the Pentecostal periodical *The Apostolic Faith* announced, “Pentecost has Come! Los Angeles being visited by a revival of Bible Salvation and Pentecost as Recorded in the Book of Acts.”⁸ Although other revivals predated Azusa Street, modern Pentecostalism exploded onto the American stage in Los Angeles, a

⁸ Author Unknown, “Pentecost Has Come” *The Apostolic Faith*, 1 (1906): 1. Reprinted by Together in Harvest Publications, Foley, Ala., 1997.

bustling, multiethnic city on the West Coast, far from the reaches of the American Protestant establishment.⁹ Pentecostalism, like Los Angeles, was rowdy, upstart, and brash—a sometimes shocking and unnerving religion. The idea that people could speak in tongues and receive healing directly from God upset many in the Protestant mainline traditions. Although some dismissed Pentecostalism, it did not fade away. Instead, it grew into a worldwide phenomenon that greatly changed the face of Christianity. In this section, I explore the beginnings of American Pentecostalism in order to trace how early Pentecostal movements laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Assemblies of God and its international and domestic missions endeavors. I start by covering the movement’s Wesleyan/Holiness and Reformed/Keswick roots, and then address its grounding in restorationism, healing, and premillennialism.

The importance of the Holiness movement to the development of American Pentecostalism cannot be overstated. An emphasis on personal Holiness dated back to John Wesley. In the eighteenth century, he preached entire sanctification, a state in which a Christian would no longer knowingly, willfully sin. Although Wesley described entire sanctification as both instantaneous and a process, many of his American descendants favored the former. Methodist preachers who emphasized “holiness” during the post-Civil War revival of the American Methodist camp meeting taught that once people experienced a new birth in Christ (known as conversion or becoming born-again; often dramatic), they could also experience a “second blessing” (also often a dramatic

⁹ For more on the importance of the Azusa Street revival to the American and world Pentecostal movement, see Cecil M. Robeck Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2006), esp. the intro.

experience) that would sanctify them and therefore make them capable of living a visibly holy and upright life. The second blessing included two critical aspects: “cleansing,” or the eradication of the inclination to sin, and “empowering,” or the baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ Of course, such a shift in Methodist theology upset some believers; the older, mainstream Methodist denominations downplayed the second blessing experience and ignored the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Many Holiness followers (as they came to be known) left and formed their own denominations such as the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene, the Pentecostal Holiness Church, the Free Methodists, and the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church.¹¹

Many scholars argue that the most important aspect of the Holiness movement to influence modern Pentecostalism stemmed from the influence of the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church and its founder, Benjamin Hardin Irwin, of Lincoln, Nebraska. Holiness theology took root in the Midwest (specifically, Iowa) and Irwin was one of its earliest promoters. Irwin studied the works of John Wesley and Wesley’s near-contemporary John Fletcher in order to understand sanctification. He argued that Fletcher described an experience akin to being “baptized with fire” in his writings—this followed sanctification.¹² Convinced that baptism by fire occurred after sanctification, Irwin began to seek it out, and in October 1895, he experienced baptism by fire.¹³ Irwin believed that

¹⁰ Vinson Synan, The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 32-34.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹² Vinson Synan, The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 51-52.

¹³ *Ibid.*

this experience constituted a “third blessing,” the experience of the Holy Spirit, which was separate from both conversion and sanctification. After his baptism by fire, he began to preach about the fire-baptized experience among Holiness followers. Many Holiness folk received Irwin’s ideas with skepticism, but some did take up the fire-baptized cause, giving birth to the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church in 1898. Scandal and Irwin’s eventual insistence that there were additional or multiple “baptisms by fire” (eventually six altogether) eventually slowed the movement’s momentum. The fire-baptized insurgence, however, is key to understanding the later Pentecostal movement because, as historian Vinson Synan puts it “by teaching that the baptism of the Holy Ghost was an experience separate from and subsequent to sanctification, it laid the basic doctrinal premise of the later movement.”¹⁴ Synan contends that the putative founder of Pentecostalism Charles F. Parham received from Irwin the “the basic idea of a separate baptism of the Holy Ghost following sanctification.”¹⁵ Holiness theology, especially its radical fire-baptized offshoot, strongly influenced early Pentecostalism, including the early Pentecostal pioneer William Seymour and other African American leaders.

Besides Holiness theology’s influence on the greater Pentecostal movement, we must also consider the influence of the Keswick movement, especially since the AG as a denomination drew heavily from that tradition. The Keswick movement, also known as the “Higher Life” movement, emerged as a British counterpart to the American Holiness movement, though with doctrinal differences and more socially well-established

¹⁴ Ibid., 59.

¹⁵ Ibid.

leaders.¹⁶ Growing from a set of summer conferences that began in northern England near the village of Keswick in 1875, the Keswick movement urged that the second blessing represented a baptism in the Holy Spirit, which led to an “endowment of power for service.”¹⁷ Believers preached that “inbred sin was progressively subjugated, yet never eradicated.”¹⁸ The Keswick movement combined the conversion and sanctification experiences and reconceived baptism in the Holy Spirit as an ongoing process, not a definable event. The most famous proponent of Keswick or Higher Life teachings was the great American evangelist Dwight L. Moody. Based in Chicago, where he founded the Bible training institute later called Moody Bible Institute, Moody conducted yearly Higher Life conferences partly to spread his Keswick teachings.¹⁹ His ideas flourished among non-Methodist denominations (chiefly Reformed traditions) such as Baptists and Presbyterians—the very groups from which the majority of the early members of the AG would come.

Restorationism took root in many forms of American Christianity, and that impulse heavily influenced early Pentecostalism. At its core lay a longing to restore the original church as displayed in the New Testament.²⁰ In nineteenth-century America, restorationism took many forms, including the Campbellites and the Church of Jesus

¹⁶ Synan, Century of Holy Spirit, 29.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Grant Wacker, “Pentecostalism,” in The Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience: Studies of Traditions and Movements eds. Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons: 1989) 2: 935.

¹⁹ Synan, Century of the Holy Spirit, 30.

²⁰ Edith L. Blumhofer, Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism and American Culture (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 12.

Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Campbellites (who became the Churches of Christ and the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ) advocated a return to the primitive Christian church, free of any trappings of tradition or outside influences. The LDS movement also sought to bring back the primitive church, but it included additional vital but previously missing revelation and Scripture. While these two examples proved radically different, both sought to “restore” the original church of Jesus and his disciples. Early Pentecostals did the same, seeing themselves as an extension of the miraculous events of Acts. In their case, they continued the tradition of the disciples because they believed that healing and miracles were not restricted to the first century church and that they would rebuild the Christian faith on this earth in a manner true to its original intent.²¹

Healing also figured prominently in the twentieth-century Pentecostal movement. The search for divine healing pervaded Christian history, including multiple American movements in the nineteenth century that predated Pentecostalism. These included Christian Science and New Thought along with many sects influenced by Holiness and Higher Life theology. Historian Edith Blumhofer contends that evangelicals began to address the issue of healing in reaction to various New Thought groups.²² Emphasis on divine healing also fit into the restorationist message: “healing had played a prominent role in the New Testament times and could be anticipated in the end-times restoration.”²³

Two of the most prominent proponents of healing, John Alexander Dowie and Maria

²¹ For more on restorationism, see Grant Wacker, “Playing for Keeps: The Primitivist Impulse in Early Pentecostalism,” in The American Quest for the Primitive Church, ed. Richard T. Hughes (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1988), 196-219.

²² Blumhofer, 19.

²³ Ibid.

Woodworth-Etter, powerfully influenced early Pentecostalism.²⁴ Dowie, a Scotsman by birth, came to America in the 1880s to spread his belief in divine healing. He established himself in Chicago in 1900 and eventually founded and developed the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion City, Illinois. Dowie emphatically believed that God could heal any illness and rejected medicine and medical personnel. He also believed that his gift of healing “marked the beginning of an end-times restoration of spiritual gifts to the church.”²⁵ In the 1880s, Maria Woodworth-Etter emerged as a healing evangelist who experienced the Holy Spirit among a group of Quakers.²⁶ By 1885, she had consolidated her beliefs on healing and began to preach that anyone who possessed sufficient faith could be healed. She started her healing ministry affiliated with the United Brethren in Christ but left the group to join the Church of God of the General Eldership. Eventually she left that denomination and drifted into nondenominational circles until her death in 1924. During her long career, Woodworth-Etter blossomed into a famous evangelist, known for her emotional revivals where participants experienced salvation and dramatic healing.²⁷

Dispensational premillennialism formed the final main influence on Pentecostalism. It incorporated a view of history popularized by the Irish Anglican John Nelson Darby in the late nineteenth century. Darby divided time—past and future—into specific periods called “dispensations.” By reading the signs of the times and biblical

²⁴ Ibid., 22.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 24.

²⁷ Ibid.

prophecy, believers could ascertain when humankind would enter the final dispensation. However, standing between the present dispensation and the next one was the Rapture. The Rapture began with Christ returning to earth and taking his saints back to heaven with him, leaving unbelievers to endure a seven-year period of trial and suffering known as the Great Tribulation. At the end of the Tribulation, Christ would return with his raptured saints to initiate the millennium, a thousand-year reign of Christ bringing peace and harmony throughout the world.²⁸ For Pentecostals, the return of the signs and wonders of the first-century church signaled the imminence of the end of the present dispensation. In the short time remaining for humankind, Christians had to evangelize and urgently spread the Gospel in order to save unbelievers. Popular among many streams of American Protestantism in the late nineteenth century, premillennialism became absolutely central to the Pentecostal worldview. While it may seem like a gloomy fixation, for believers, premillennialism was actually filled with hope—an expectant waiting for Christ to come back and establish his rule. Early American Pentecostals often came from Protestant groups that had been shaped by premillennialism. In fact, many early Pentecostals believed that they alone practiced the one true faith that would allow them to ascend in the Rapture and be spared from the Tribulation.²⁹

While the Wesleyan/Holiness movement, Kewsick/Higher Life movement, restorationism, healing, and premillennialism all deeply influenced Pentecostalism, they did not coalesce into a single identifiable stream until the beginning of the twentieth

²⁸ Ibid.,16.

²⁹ Ibid.

century. The first major figure in modern Pentecostalism was a short, frail preacher named Charles Fox Parham, whose work in the Midwest eventually led to the Azusa Street revival. Born in Iowa, Parham eventually migrated to southeastern Kansas. There he founded the Apostolic Faith Movement in which he preached what he believed to be “true biblical Christianity.” Parham eschewed traditional forms of worship and spread his version of the Gospel through itinerant preaching as well as house services.³⁰

Parham did not exist in a vacuum. A variety of radical evangelical beliefs prevalent at the time, particularly those propounded by Holiness leader Frank Sandford, directly influenced his work. Mid-1900, Parham briefly visited Sandford’s Holy Ghost and Us Bible School in Shiloh, Maine.³¹ Sandford’s ministries at Shiloh emphasized Keswick-style holiness, restorationism, premillennialism, and, above all divine healing. During his month at Shiloh, the Bible school and the spontaneous and fervent nature of the worship impressed Parham. He returned to Topeka, Kansas, and opened Bethel Bible College, which attracted believers seeking a new empowerment of the Holy Spirit.³² There, Parham gathered the different strands of his religious convictions: he was convinced that healing was integral to Christian experience, that Christians should experience a special baptism of the Holy Spirit, that a new wave of world evangelism was imminent, that God was giving at least a few select believers the ability to speak

³⁰ Ibid., 43-45. After Parham, most Pentecostal writers divided tongues into two types: tongues as evidence, which always accompanied authentic Holy Spirit baptism, and tongues as gift, which included (but was not always restricted to) the ability to speak actual unstudied languages. See Grant Wacker, Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2001), 35-57.

³¹ Douglas Jacobsen, Thinking In the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 23.

³² Blumhofer, Restoring the Faith, 50.

unlearned foreign languages, and that the apocalypse was at hand.³³ Historians credit Parham for being the first to argue that the gift of tongues was “always the initial evidence of a person’s receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit.”³⁴ In other words, according to Parham, believer experienceds three distinct steps during their spiritual journey: conversion, sanctification, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with tongues as the tangible evidence.³⁵

One of Parham’s earliest followers was Agnes Ozman. She actively sought the baptism of the Holy Spirit while enrolled at Bethel Bible College. Various accounts of the incident exist, but according to Parham, Ozman began spontaneously speaking in tongues on January 1, 1901. Believers interpreted the language as Chinese and Ozman continued to speak in tongues for three days. Following Ozman, several other students also began to do so. Despite this promising beginning, Bethel Bible School closed only a few months after Ozman’s experience, having attracted negative attention from the press. The core band of believers dispersed across the country, leaving Parham to rebuild his ministry.³⁶ None, including Ozman, ever became a missionary.

Parham regrouped, gaining small bands of followers who set out with him to proclaim the gospel in southeast Kansas. They continued traveling to Houston, Texas, where they established another short-lived Bible school. There, Parham met William Seymour, an African American man who already was a seasoned Holiness evangelist.

³³ Jacobsen, 25.

³⁴ Synan, Century of the Holy Spirit, 42-45.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Blumhofer, 51-53.

Seymour's friend Lucy Farrow, another African American follower of Parham's, had convinced him to hear Parham's message. Intrigued, Seymour went to hear Parham preach his new "Apostolic Faith" message and became convinced that baptism of the Holy Spirit was separate from sanctification and that it was evidenced by speaking in tongues.³⁷ Jim Crow laws and Parham's segregationist views kept Seymour from studying in the classroom with white students or ministering to a white audience. Yet Seymour attended Parham's Bible school—apparently he sat outside of the classroom or behind a curtain—and then began a ministry preaching to Houston African Americans. He soon received an offer to preach in Los Angeles, and Parham reluctantly agreed to let him go. Seymour left Parham and Farrow later joined him. Together, they preached among friends in Los Angeles.³⁸

During the beginning of their work in Los Angeles, Seymour, Farrow, and fellow preacher J.A. Warren considered themselves under Parham's leadership and a part of his movement. Initially, they spread the Apostolic Faith—later called Pentecostalism because of the miraculous signs and wonders that took place on the Day of Pentecost—by evangelizing at sympathetic independent churches, where they attracted attention for their preaching and emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues. Eventually they found a home at 312 Azusa Street. At the Azusa Street mission, Pentecostalism exploded into the consciousness of Americans, spurred by reports from the *Los Angeles Times* and later by the Pentecostal periodical *The Apostolic Faith*. In Los

³⁷ Robeck, 46.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

Angeles, Pentecostals found a city that housed many small independent radical evangelical groups. From the onset of the revival, believers left on faith missions to go across America and overseas to spread the Gospel. The first adherents blurred racial lines, with African Americans, Hispanics, a few American Indians, and whites all worshipping together. But while racial mixing reportedly occurred, the majority of Seymour's early followers were African American. The movement gained considerable press for Seymour and his followers, but Parham was not impressed. Disgusted by the racial mixing and the more emotional worship practices, he denounced Seymour's mission. The early Pentecostal movement viewed Parham as an embarrassment and he faded into history.³⁹

From Azusa Street, Seymour and his followers dispersed to other parts of the United States. Besides Azusa Street, several major centers of Pentecostalism emerged, including the Churches of God in Christ (now the major African American Pentecostal denomination) in the South; a variety of southern restorationist and Pentecostal groups; and large missions in Illinois, New York, Texas, and Arkansas.⁴⁰ In its early years, Pentecostalism mainly spread through the efforts of missionaries or evangelists. According to Blumhofer, many Americans found themselves ready to receive the message of Pentecostalism because of its restorationist and millenarian tendencies, two religious ideas that continually re-emerged and reshaped themselves in the American

³⁹ Blumhofer, 60.

⁴⁰ See Restoring the Faith, esp. chap. 3, for an in-depth look at all of these groups and how they fit into the greater American Pentecostal network.

religious experience.⁴¹ Yet the emotional appeal of Pentecostalism provided its main draw. As Blumhofer states: “But, at face value, its primary significance lay in its ability to overwhelm human emotions, replacing despair with hope and uncertainty with assurance and an inner sense of peace.”⁴² Pentecostalism gave its adherents a new, powerful sense of self and an emotional connection to God that no other Protestant tradition offered. Instead of relying on a preacher to tell them about God, Pentecostal believers experienced God in the most dramatic way possible, through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. For Pentecostals, God was no longer a distant idea. Instead he was a tangible, powerful figure who could heal the sick, perform miracles, and give believers a holy language that was evidence of his work in their lives.

2.2 The Beginnings of the Assemblies of God

During the early years of the Pentecostal movement, a variety of independent churches and groups began to thrive. Yet early Pentecostalism lacked organization. The gifts and authority of the Holy Spirit meant that most of its early leaders were men and women called to the faith rather than those who had formal training to be leaders. The resulting lack of organization presented numerous problems for early Pentecostals. In 1913, the mostly white and loosely organized Pentecostal leadership in the Midwest sent out a letter to other pioneers in the movement and advertised in Pentecostal periodicals

⁴¹ Ibid., 70.

⁴² Ibid.

that it wanted to organize a general council of all Pentecostals.⁴³ These leaders drew mainly from four main Pentecostal groups: Parham's following in Texas and Arkansas, the Zion City group founded by John Alexander Dowie, William H. Durham and William H. Piper's missions from Chicago, and Pentecostal believers who had left A.B. Simpson's Christian and Missionary Alliance.⁴⁴ These groups differed in theology from the Holiness groups that had initially popularized early Pentecostalism. Instead of coming from a Methodist, Wesleyan background, the groups that initially made up the AG came mainly from Baptist, Presbyterian and non-Wesleyan Reformed traditions influenced by the Keswick teachings.⁴⁵ These groups did not agree with the Holiness idea that sanctification was a "perfecting work of grace." Instead, "they wanted to return to a position more characteristic of the Reformed tradition in which sanctification was understood as a process that commences at conversion, but was never 'perfected' in this life."⁴⁶ They also held to a second distinct experience in the order of salvation that they called baptism of the Holy Spirit, always evidenced by speaking in tongues as the Spirit gave utterance. These differences also meant that the AG drew from the white Midwest and South rather than African American Pentecostals who were steeped in the Holiness tradition.

⁴³ Edith Blumhofer, The Assemblies of God, A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism, (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 1: 201.

⁴⁴ Grant Wacker, "The Assemblies of God," in Religion In the South, eds. Samuel Hill and Charles Lippy (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005), 87.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Pentecostal leaders flocked to Hot Springs, Arkansas, in the early spring of 1914 to take part in the council.⁴⁷ Prior to this call for a council, some semblance of organization existed in midwestern, white, Higher-Life Pentecostalism, mainly through the publication of periodicals, the camp meeting circuit, and other conventions. The lack of a formal organization, however, meant that Pentecostals had no appointed leadership to speak for them.⁴⁸ This council allowed the movement to standardize its beliefs and goals so that Pentecostals could be more effective at spreading the gospel. The council began with four days of meetings that focused on awakening the Holy Spirit. On Monday, April 6, the council organized itself for formal meetings and set forth its explicit purposes, later published in the Pentecostal periodical *Word and Witness*.⁴⁹ These were: 1) to clarify doctrine and reduce theological differences in the Pentecostal ranks; 2) to emphasize missions, both home and foreign; 3) to find ways of funding the missionary project in the most efficient manner possible; 4) to charter churches under one name and one leadership; and 5) to develop a Bible school network.⁵⁰ These motivations led to the founding of the Assemblies of God.

With such purposes firmly in mind, Pentecostal leaders elected E.N. Bell as the chair of the new council and J.R. Flower as the secretary.⁵¹ After some deliberation, the council extended voting rights only to male members of the leadership, and a preamble

⁴⁷ Blumhofer, *Assemblies of God*, 1:197.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 201-202.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

and resolution of constitution emerged. This document declared that the council's purpose was

...Neither to legislate laws of government, nor usurp authority over said Assemblies of God, nor deprive them of their Scriptural and local rights and privileges, but to recognize Scriptural methods and order for worship, unity, fellowship, work and business doctrines and conduct, and approve of all Scriptural truth and conduct...⁵²

The statement evidenced the Pentecostal tendency to minimize a formal denominational leadership. The designation "Assemblies of God" originally referred to the variety of Pentecostal churches that came together for the council, but the name became permanent. Along with adopting the resolution, the council elected a small group of men to an advisory body known as the Executive Presbytery.⁵³ The members of the first Executive Presbytery acted on behalf of the General Council in overseeing home and foreign missions.⁵⁴ The first Executive Presbytery consisted of twelve men, most of them influential leaders in the movement. Though they were members of the Executive Presbytery, they all also ran successful ministries elsewhere.⁵⁵

Once the council selected an Executive Presbytery, the AG began to concentrate on other pressing issues. First, it dealt with the need for an educational network where believers could gain a biblically sound education. The General Council began to solicit ideas for what became an extensive AG Bible school network. But with little organization

⁵² General Council Minutes 1914, from General Council Minutes and Reports 1914-1999, Heritage Digital Documents, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, 4.

⁵³ Blumhofer, The Assemblies of God, 1: 203-204.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

and funding available, they decided to make use of closely aligned schools. The General Council selected the Bible school of Rueben Benjamin Chisolm in Union, Mississippi, and T.K. Leonard's Gospel School in Findley, Ohio.⁵⁶ In addition, the AG adopted J.R. Flower's *Christian Evangel* (now the *Pentecostal Evangel*) as its weekly paper.⁵⁷ The first General Council also took an official stance on the role of women, directly influenced by the new chairman, E.N. Bell, who outlined his beliefs in the early Pentecostal periodical *Word and Witness*.⁵⁸ Bell found no scriptural precept that allowed women to exercise independent leadership or to serve as church pastors. He did, however, believe that women enjoyed the right to prophecy, and he agreed that the meaning of "prophecy" could remain broad.⁵⁹ Following this argument, the General Council decreed that women retained the right to serve as missionaries and evangelists but denied them pastoral ministry or any office that would place them over men.⁶⁰ This official stance insured that the early Assemblies of God functioned under a white male power structure. Female Pentecostals thus found themselves locked out of many options enjoyed by the earliest male leaders.

2.3 The Beginning of Foreign and Home Missions

From 1914 to 1918, the General Council met yearly and agreed upon major issues of doctrine, including its affirmation of tongues as evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1:205.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1:204.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 1:206.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

After 1918, the growing denomination concentrated on building its internal structure—particularly its missions, both foreign and home, as well as publishing and education. According to mission historian Gary McGee, “The period from 1914 to 1926 represents the most unstable years in the history of the Assemblies of God missions program.”⁶¹ McGee categorizes early missionaries into four subgroups. First are those touched by the Pentecostal fire who immediately departed for foreign lands without any training in language or culture, special education, or even dependable financial backing. The majority of these missionaries returned home once they encountered difficulties too hard to overcome.⁶² The second group left for the mission field without any training, but recognized the need for language and cultural study; they learned the needed languages and sought to understand the foreign culture of the country that they had selected.⁶³ The third group consisted of veterans from other Protestant missionary organizations. These included trained missionaries who had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit while in the field and then came to the Assemblies of God. McGee points out that this band provided much of the needed stability and organization for the foreign missions movement in the early years.⁶⁴ The fourth group of missionaries came a few years later; they had been educated in the early AG Bible institutes.⁶⁵

The movement away from complete faith missions toward a formalized system of mission support signified the AG’s evolution from its roots as a boisterous early

⁶¹ McGee, 85.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 86.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.

Pentecostal sect to greater structure and stability, as did the development of the AG publishing system. The Gospel Publishing House, the official press, had been instrumental to the denomination's growth and to its missions program. By 1919, the Gospel Publishing House had combined the Pentecostal periodicals *The Word and Witness* and the *Christian Evangel* to create the *Pentecostal Evangel (PE)*, the flagship periodical of the fellowship.⁶⁶ The *PE* mainly served to keep the early Pentecostal fervor over the baptism of the Holy Spirit alive, but it also functioned as a useful tool for early missionaries. The *PE* was the one official periodical that most AG members received, and missionaries were able to place their pleas for money in its pages. The AG distributed the *PE* as widely as possible, so that missionaries could use it as an evangelistic and fundraising tool. The Gospel Publishing House published thousands of tracts and hymnals for missionary use both in foreign and home missions. It also published Sunday school lessons for pastors and their Sunday school teachers. By 1925, the Gospel Publishing House had produced "111,000 pieces of Sunday School literature per quarter, two children's papers with a circulation of 37,000, and printed more than 5 million copies of Assemblies of God publications."⁶⁷

The desire for greater stability led to a permanent educational institution. In 1922, the General Council secured a tract of land on the north side of Springfield, Missouri.⁶⁸ There, they built the campus for what became the Central Bible Institute, the first General Council-approved school of the AG. The General Council designed a curriculum focused

⁶⁶ Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God*, 1:282.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:285.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:318.

on training missionaries and pastors and began to construct dormitories and classrooms. CBI welcomed all who believed that they had the proper calling and Pentecostal experience to undertake training for the ministry, regardless of their educational backgrounds.⁶⁹ The General Council also decided that CBI would be the model for all AG Bible institutes, so the AG developed multiple schools using CBI's curriculum.⁷⁰ Yet even with the building of CBI, the majority of early foreign and home missionaries (including those who evangelized American Indians) lacked a Bible school or Bible institute education. Usually they simply learned what they needed to learn on the mission field.

As noted, from the onset of the Pentecostal movement, missionaries evangelized other cultures. By 1919, the growing number of foreign missionaries prompted the AG to develop a separate Foreign Missions Department overseen by the Executive Presbytery.⁷¹ J.R. Flower led this first Missions Department and began the difficult task of determining both a budget and the direction for the AG's foreign missions program.⁷² Flower had to define a distinctly Pentecostal approach to missions. Would Pentecostals engage the world, as their Protestant counterparts did, by building orphanages and schools? Or would they focus solely on evangelization, in the belief that conversion and baptism of the Holy Spirit were the two most important elements?⁷³ Although most Pentecostals

⁶⁹ Ibid., 1:319.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 1:292.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ For more on this missionary dilemma, see, William R. Hutchison, Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), esp. chap. 3.

focused on evangelization, a few early missionaries, such as Lillian Trasher, operated orphanages or schools.⁷⁴

During the first years of Flower's tenure, the geographical distribution followed the trend already established by Holiness missionaries.⁷⁵ Missionaries established outposts in foreign missions around the world, and when they achieved critical mass, they formed district councils. Flower divided the foreign missionary field using the model of districts for AG churches in the United States. The earliest foreign districts included North China, North India, Japan, Egypt, and Liberia.⁷⁶ As missionaries proliferated around the world, new districts formed. The creation of districts allowed for better organization, which enabled the AG to distribute its missionary personnel and funds more effectively.

Money formed the greatest problem facing the foreign missions department in the early years. Because most Pentecostals went on faith missions, they needed funds from supporters back in the United States—funds that were often undependable. For instance, publishing revenue from the *PE* originally supported the foreign missions. As the number of foreign missionaries grew, however, the publishing revenues could no longer carry all the cost.⁷⁷ As a result, Flower decided to revise the financing strategy. He estimated that missionaries needed \$40 a month to cover basic expenses, \$15 for each child, and \$500

⁷⁴ Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God*, 1:293.

⁷⁵ Wacker, "Pentecostalism," 937.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ McGee, 110.

for travel funds to and from the field. In 1922, Flower set the goal of raising \$233,800.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, the job of secretary-treasurer of the Foreign Missions Department had become too much for one person, so they divided the position. Flower stayed on as treasurer, and William Faux became secretary.⁷⁹ Flower continued to advocate for more standardization in foreign missions, pushing through guidelines that stressed the Pauline example of indigenous churches in foreign missions. He also mandated that missionaries meet the Foreign Missions Committee in Springfield, urged them to attend Central Bible Institute, and empowered the Foreign Missions Committee to set the standards of training and screening.⁸⁰ While some missionaries chafed at the new requirements, Flower believed that the new standards would improve the quality of AG's missions work.⁸¹ Flower's early standards and innovations provided the basis for the AG foreign missionary enterprise. Although the structure and organization set up by Flower promoted efficiency, it also made innovation and inclusion of newcomers more difficult in the coming years.

While the Foreign Missions Department developed a detailed and well-documented mission statement and set standards for foreign missions, historians have largely ignored home missions. Unlike foreign missions, home missionaries did not benefit from an existing framework. Initially, "home missions" simply designated missionary activity that took place in the United States among groups outside the reach of

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 114.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 113.

⁸¹ Ibid.

mainstream Christianity. Officially, it remained under the auspices of the Foreign Missions Department from 1914-1937.⁸² The reasons for not supporting a separate department for home missions remain unclear. However, we can surmise that given the AG's laser-like focus on foreign territories, the home front lacked appeal. Foreign missions were exciting—Pentecostal missionaries expected to encounter a new culture and new language, and deal directly with “the godless heathen.” Home missions, on the other hand, meant traveling to an impoverished part of the United States to work among people who were already suspicious of Christian missionaries, who had long suffered from institutionalized forms of racism and classism, and who in many cases were already Christians—just not of the “right” variety. Foreign missions were full of hope—they had a chance to evangelize people that had been untouched by Christianity. Home missions, on the other hand, forced Pentecostals to open their eyes to the injustices in their own society.

Yet some AG missionaries did feel called to domestic fields. American Indians were not the only group chosen for evangelization by Pentecostals. Home missions grew among the mountain people of Appalachia, Mexicans living in the southwestern United States, prison inmates, Gypsies, and, eventually, the military, the deaf, Alaskan natives, African Americans, and Jews. Over the twentieth century, the groups changed and

⁸² Ruth Lyon, A History of Home Missions of the Assemblies of God (Springfield Mo., Self-published: 1992), 9.

evolved, but the outlook of the home missions remained the same: to serve and evangelize minority, disabled, and isolated groups in the United States.⁸³

Articles in the *PE* before 1937 reveal that home missions cropped up here and there but lacked effective organization. Where home missions existed, the missionaries dealt with the unique problems of each situation on their own. This protocol, or lack thereof, resembled that of many world missionaries at the onset of the Pentecostal movement. But by the 1930s, foreign missions flourished among the AG and had organized structure as well as goals. Home missions did not develop a cohesive structure and goals for until almost two decades had passed.

In 1921, the General Council established a fund for home missions within the Foreign Missions Department. It also encouraged the *PE* to run articles and ads that solicited funds for home missionaries.⁸⁴ By 1927, many who were involved in home missions believed they warranted their own department. Yet with foreign missions, publishing, and education taking up much of the available funding, a separate department of home missions was not approved because of a lack of money. Some AG leaders also resisted the idea of establishing a separate home missions department, since they implicitly assumed that all Pentecostals would evangelize their fellow Americans.⁸⁵ In 1937, delegates reached a compromise, and the General Council created a new Department of Home Missions joined with the Education Department.⁸⁶ This decision led

⁸³ For more on early home missions, see Lyon, esp. 9-45.

⁸⁴ Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God*, 1: 334.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:339.

to a decades-long involvement between the two departments. The man chosen to oversee the Department of Home Missions was Fred Vogler, whose tenure led to more structure for home missions.⁸⁷ Vogler established guidelines for the Home Missions Department, whose missionaries would work in cooperation with the district where they were stationed. The AG encouraged the missionaries to attend Bible schools and established a permanent fund to support them.⁸⁸ Under Vogler's careful eye, home missions gained publicity in the *PE*, which helped with the recruitment of missionaries from Bible schools and among talented evangelists who possessed passion but no Bible school education.

By the early 1950s, Vogler developed a national appointment process for home missionaries, which allowed the AG to ensure that they were qualified. We know little of the guidelines, but we can safely assume that they resembled those listed on the AG's ordination application from this period. The application asked for basic personal information, education, literacy, when one had been baptized in the Holy Spirit and if one had received the gift of tongues, if one agreed with the tenets laid down by the General Council, and if one affirmed the fundamental truths of 1 Corinthians 1:10 and Acts 2:42.⁸⁹ The first national missionary appointment took place in 1952, and that the missionary was an American Indian—Charlie Lee of the Navajo Nation, graduate of the Central Bible Institute and the Santa Fe Indian School, nationally renowned artist,

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 1:333.

⁸⁹ Deceased Minister Files, "Charles Lee," from Application from Ordination, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center. 1 Cor. 1:10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Acts 2:42: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (KJV)

maverick Pentecostal evangelist, and fervent believer in the indigenous principle.⁹⁰ The AG appointed a man who would forever change the face of Pentecostal missions to American Indians and who would force the AG to examine what it really meant by the indigenous principle.

2.4 The Indigenous Principle

That an American Indian could be the first nationally appointed home missionary testifies to two truths about the AG's earliest home missions. First, home missionaries had established themselves on some Indian reservations well before the AG organized a Department of Home Missions. Second, at least some home missionaries proved open to the indigenous principle—their goal was to send promising young Native leaders to Bible school so that they could return to their own people as missionaries. In order fully to understand the indigenous principle and the later struggles of American Indian Pentecostals who tried to realize it, we need to examine its theology and history in the Protestant missionary enterprise and its articulation in a Pentecostal framework.

Indigenous church methods were unique neither to Pentecostalism nor to Protestant Christianity. The root of the idea for the indigenous church came from the letters of Paul. Pentecostals referred to verses in Acts 13:43–49, 14:3, 16:4–5 and 20:28 as the “Pauline example” that provided the biblical foundation for their ideas regarding indigenous churches.⁹¹ The first influential theorist of the indigenous church was Rufus

⁹⁰ Lyon, 30.

⁹¹ Acts 13:43-49: “Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And

Anderson, the secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), the first major American Protestant foreign missionary council. Anderson's service to the ABCFM began in 1820 when he was still at Andover seminary, but he did not assume responsibility for the foreign missions program until 1832. His long career lasted into the final decades of the nineteenth century.⁹²

Since Pentecostal missiologists often referred to Anderson as their inspiration for the indigenous principle, it is useful to explore his work, even though he predated the Pentecostal movement by half a century.⁹³ Anderson's perspective on missions followed a strict sequence: the missionary plants a church among native people; the missionary trains and educates a Native pastorate; the missionary gives Natives the responsibility for running the church; and finally, the missionary hands over control of the church and

the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region." Acts 14:3: "Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands." Acts 16:4-5: "And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (KJV)

⁹²Hutchison, 87.

⁹³Gary McGee, "Assemblies of God Mission Theology: A Historical Perspective," The International Bulletin of Missionary Research, October (1986): 166.

leaves.⁹⁴ According to historian William Hutchison, Anderson’s work, based on two major premises, proved innovative. Hutchison states, “One of these [premises], the expected triumph of Christian religion and civilization, represented the conventional wisdom of his time and required little argument—merely occasional incantation at the expected level of militancy.”⁹⁵ The second premise is more important for understanding the direction and parameters of Anderson’s work for indigenous churches. Hutchison puts it this way:

Anderson’s program was a thoroughgoing trust in the working of the Holy Spirit. His lifelong campaign against the imposition of Western cultural and religious patterns, and in favor of independent native churches, bespoke no appreciable sympathy for foreign peoples or cultures; it rested on an insistence that the Gospel, once implanted, can be relied upon to foster true religion, sound learning and a complete Christian civilization—all in forms that will meet biblical standards and fulfill the needs of a given people.⁹⁶

In other words, Christianity, as the inherently superior religion, would grow and by itself civilize the “uncivilized” natives if properly planted, according to Hutchison’s interpretation of Anderson. For these reasons, Anderson believed that teaching natives English or founding missionary schools or hospitals as a civilizing influences represented a waste of missionary effort.⁹⁷

While Anderson’s theories sound remarkably modern and served as the distant inspiration for the AG’s later articulation of the indigenous principle, a few caveats are in

⁹⁴ Hutchison, 79-81.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

order. While Anderson successfully voiced these theories, he proved unable to enforce them among all of the numerous ABCFM missionaries. He also never directly addressed the issue of paternalism, as later AG missiologists did—indeed, during Anderson’s time, missionaries did not understand paternalism as a problem. Finally, Anderson’s theories meant that natives would be able to run their own churches at the parish level, but he made no provision for their ascending in the church hierarchy. While native pastors in India, for example, could run their own churches, they remained under a white bishop or church board. Still, Anderson’s ideas proved progressive for his era, and they foreshadowed the struggle other Protestant groups in America experienced when they confronted the problems of the indigenous church.

Early in the twentieth century, the Pentecostal movement faced the difficulty of articulating a position on foreign mission work. Coming at the end of the “Great Century” of Christian missions, Pentecostals looked to Scripture. With the precedent set by the Pauline example of church planting and with Anderson’s advocacy for indigenous missions to guide them, Pentecostals tried to craft an indigenous principle⁹⁸ for their own mission theology. According to McGee, three reasons explain why Pentecostals decided to adopt the indigenous principle and expand it beyond Anderson’s ideas. First, the early Pentecostals who united to become the Assemblies of God were, as a group, anti-authoritarian. They based their approach to missions on Acts, where they read of

⁹⁸ Melvin Hodges was the first to articulate the phrase “indigenous principle.” His predecessors did not use the term. They usually said “Pauline example” or “indigenous church planting.”

“independent congregations, directed by the Spirit, evangelizing their vicinities.”⁹⁹

Therefore, they did not approve of a powerful missions board directing missionary actions. While the AG did eventually develop a missions division, for the first thirty years it mainly served as a fundraiser rather than as an overseer of the ministries of individual missionaries. Pentecostals believed, like Anderson, that a person only needed the Spirit and a working knowledge of the Bible.¹⁰⁰

Second, A.B. Simpson and the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) emphasized the indigenous church principle and taught it at his Missionary Training Institute in Nyack, New York in the 1890s and 1900s.¹⁰¹ After Pentecostalism grew widespread among members of the CMA, a large number left the organization when others refused to acknowledge the baptism of the Holy Spirit with tongues as evidence. Many of these breakaway missionaries trained at Nyack under Simpson, and they went on to become leaders and early missionaries for the AG. They brought to their new posts Simpson’s ideas on indigenous church methods.¹⁰²

Finally, the most important influence on the AG’s development of an indigenous church theology emerged in the writings of the pre-Pentecostal Roland Allen.¹⁰³ Allen published a small book titled *Missionary Methods: St. Paul or Ours?* In the book, he used the ministry of Paul as an inspiration and explanation for how to apply indigenous church planting to missions work. His ideas resembled Anderson’s, but he was the first to write a

⁹⁹ McGee, Assemblies of God Mission Theology, 166.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

detailed explanation of the indigenous principle that invoked the work of Paul. Allen's book influenced two major AG missionaries and leaders, Alice Luce and Noel Perkin. Luce and Perkin influenced Melvin Hodges, who became the most articulate and vocal Pentecostal proponent of what he would term "the indigenous principle."¹⁰⁴

Alice Luce served as an influential white missionary to Mexican Americans and Mexicans in the Southwest.¹⁰⁵ According to McGee, she read Allen's work not long after its publication in 1912. "Although she initially felt that his suggestions were unrealistic, later reflection caused her to recognize 'the diametrical distinction between our methods of working and those of the New Testament.'"¹⁰⁶ In January of 1921, Luce incorporated Allen's ideas into her missionary philosophy, printed as a series in the *PE*. In the series, she undertook a critical reading of Paul's letters in order to develop a Pentecostal approach to missions. In her analysis, she emphasized the power of the Holy Spirit, pointing out that it was essential that missionaries be called by the Spirit and only those that were truly called would have the ability to make clear and biblically sound decisions.¹⁰⁷ She also stated that such a missionary would heed the "checks of the Spirit" as well as the advice of others and would focus on preaching "only Christ."¹⁰⁸ Her most important remarks, however, came in the third installment of her series on church

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 166-67.

¹⁰⁵ For more information on Alice Luce and her ministry to the Latino population, see Everett A. Wilson and Ruth Marshall Wilson, "Alice E. Luce: A Visionary Victorian," in Portraits of a Generation: Early Pentecostal Leaders, eds. James R Goff and Grant Wacker (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 159-176.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 166.

¹⁰⁷ Alice Luce, "Paul's Missionary Methods," The Pentecostal Evangel, 8 January 1921, 6.

¹⁰⁸ Alice Luce, "Paul's Missionary Methods Part 2," The Pentecostal Evangel, 22 January 1921, 6.

building. There, Luce stated, Paul’s “aim was to found in every place a self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating church.”¹⁰⁹ According to Luce, missionaries must strive toward building such churches, even if they eventually fail. And if they fail, Luce argued, it could be owing to a variety of reasons, including the pride of the missionary, or that the missionary and his or her converts were never really Pentecostal and therefore were not guided by the Holy Spirit. Failure was not an inherently bad thing—it could lead to a humble re-examination by the missionary and converts that might result in eventual success.¹¹⁰

Finally, Luce took Anderson’s belief in the superiority of American civilization and culture and subverted it, by urging missionaries to “work harmoniously with others, whatever their nationality” and by noting that “We do not read of [God] making any distinction whatever founded merely on race or nationality.”¹¹¹ She went on to state:

Many say that these young assemblies need foreign supervision for a long time. Possibly so, but that is not because we are foreigners, but because we are older in the faith, and have experienced more of the Spirit’s guidance that they have... The babes in Christ always need the help of those who are older and more spiritual; but let us make our greater experience, or spirituality, or capacity for supervision the criterion and **not our nationality**. And when the Lord raises up spiritually qualified leaders in the native churches themselves, what a joy it will be to us to be subject to them and to let them take the lead as the Spirit Himself shall guide them.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Alice Luce, “Paul’s Missionary Methods Part 3,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 5 February 1921, 6.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.; emphasis in the original.

Luce closed her argument by emphasizing the interdependence of missionaries and converts, noting that neither can operate without the other.¹¹³ Luce's assertion that missionaries were not superior to their native converts because of their nationality but because of their spirituality proved both progressive and troubling. Luce was one of the first AG missionaries to distance herself from the idea of American imperialism and cultural superiority. Yet she replaced it with a Christian spiritual superiority, based on the length of time one had enjoyed the Spirit's guidance. Since the AG missionaries had more time in their faith than their newly converted charges, this still translated into an American spiritual superiority and paternalism. Luce never directly combated paternalism, leaving the problem for later missiologists to solve. Along with Luce, Noel Perkin, the director of foreign missions from 1927-1959, strongly encouraged missionaries to follow the writings of Allen and to take up the Pauline example in their missionary work.¹¹⁴

While Luce exercised a tremendous amount of influence over the AG's missionary endeavors, the most important influence came from the Latin American missiologist and former missionary, Melvin Hodges. His work *The Indigenous Church* was originally a series of lectures delivered at the 1950 Missionary Conference in Springfield, Missouri.¹¹⁵ Hodges's work saw publication in a small booklet. Gaining popularity quickly, Hodges started training missionaries to be followers of his indigenous

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ McGee, *Assemblies of God Mission Theology*, 168.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

principle while he was teaching at Central Bible Institute.¹¹⁶ In many ways, Hodges's work echoed Anderson, Allen, Luce and the ideas of Perkin, but it was the first systematically to bring together all aspects of indigenous mission theory in a Pentecostal framework. It was also the first to discredit paternalism and nationalism. In Hodges's view, paternalistic missionaries who thought they knew best never actually received the gifts of the Spirit. Hodges was the first AG missiologist to say openly that the very nature of paternalism was un-Pentecostal and detrimental to mission work. A true Pentecostal missionary had to trust in the Spirit and the ability of his converts.

In *The Indigenous Church*, Hodges argued aggressively against the evils of paternalism, even to the point of offending his fellow missionaries. This bluntness emerges in the following passage, where he expounds the need to build an indigenous church:

We must found a truly indigenous church on the mission field because the Church of Jesus Christ in China, in Latin America or in Africa, is not, or should not be, a branch of the Church in America. It must be a Church in its own right. We should plant the gospel seed and cultivate it in such a way that it will produce the Chinese or the African Church. We must train the national church in independence rather than dependence.¹¹⁷

Missionaries unwilling to give up their power and the purse strings to Native leadership formed one of the main hindrances to an indigenous church, according to Hodges.¹¹⁸ He also inveighed against missionaries fostering dependence in the church by providing for

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Melvin Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1953), 10.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 111.

the people and by not letting them have any say in the management of the church or fundraising.¹¹⁹ Throughout his work, Hodges argued that Native peoples, with the help of the Holy Spirit, were completely capable of running their own churches. It harmed the AG missionary system if missionaries failed to train the converts to do so. Paternalism, nationalism, or a belief in spiritual superiority should never hinder this goal. To allow that to happen, in Hodges's view, undermined the very nature of Pentecostalism as a religion for all people.¹²⁰

Hodges's work met resistance from those in the mission field who were used to working independently. Many missionaries did not agree with Hodges, and it took the AG a long time to implement the indigenous principle in its foreign missions work and an even longer time in its missions to American Indians. But Hodges gave his students and followers a carefully argued articulation of how the Gospel should be realized in missions work. Those who absorbed Hodges's work proved influential in helping Pentecostalism bring local Native churches into being.

One of Hodges's greatest influences was a young Navajo artist-turned-preacher named Charlie Lee. While at Central Bible Institute in the late 1940s, Lee took Hodges's classes and wholly absorbed his ideas on the indigenous principle. When Lee returned to the Navajo reservation in 1952, he avidly embraced Hodges's ideas, much to the dismay of his white missionary colleagues. In 1976, after twenty-five years of toil, Lee realized

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ The "indigenous principle" as articulated by Hodges contained Anderson's ideas regarding church planting and indigenous leadership coupled with Hodges's thorough and self-conscious repudiation of paternalism and the belief that indigenous people had a right to and should seek out positions in church leadership.

his dream: the first fully indigenous AG American Indian church. The success of this church, in turn, forced the AG to confront its deepest held principles and beliefs regarding the power of the Holy Spirit in missionary work.

2.5 Early Missions to American Indians: 1918-1950

We know very little about early AG missionary work to American Indians. Aside from a few brief articles in the *PE*, we find no other records. This section, therefore, depends on the *PE* for its reconstruction of where and when the earliest efforts took place. Although I must describe these early years in general terms, they nevertheless reveal two important early trends in AG missionary work to Indians: the geographic concentration of Indian missions in the West/Southwest (with the exception of the Mohawks in upstate New York), and the development of local Native leadership, encouraged by white missionaries, despite missionary paternalism.

During the early years of AG missions to Indians, evangelists seemed to go wherever they wanted. The effort to Native Americans lacked any real direction until the end of the 1930s and did not really flourish as a movement until the 1950s. The first reference to a mission to Indians occurs in the *PE*'s predecessor, the *Christian Evangel*. In 1918, Clyde Thompson reported that he was living among the Indians of northern California near Lamoine (Shasta Lakes region).¹²¹ Other than asking for prayers for success, Thompson gave no information on the tribe or the conditions.¹²² After this one brief mention, Thompson does not again appear in the *PE*, but it appears that his mission

¹²¹ Clyde Thompson, "Amongst the Indians," *The Christian Evangel*, 27 July 1918, 5.

¹²² *Ibid.*

to Indians in northern California survived, or that he at least inspired other workers. In 1927, the *PE* reported of an outreach in Humboldt County among the Hoopa.¹²³ Aside from one short article on a mission to a tribe in the Battle Mountain region of Nevada, missions to California Indians were the only ones of their kind for sixteen years.¹²⁴ This emphasis on converting northern California Indians resulted from the strenuous efforts of the missionaries J.D. Wells and D.L. Brown, who wrote several articles on their plight. The articles emphasized their poverty, mistreatment at the hands of the federal government, and “spiritual darkness.” The *PE* published the articles in order to raise funds for Wells’s and Brown’s work.¹²⁵ Although contextual information in their articles is scant, these two men apparently moved among the small bands of northern California Indians scattered in the region. In 1931, the *PE* reported that there were AG mission stations among only eight groups of Indians in the United States.¹²⁶ Other than the outreach to Indians in Nevada, the *PE* cited no other outposts. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the other seven of those eight stations were scattered among the Indians of rural northern California.

¹²³ Author Unknown, “Indian Church At Hoopa Now an Assembly of God,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 5 March 1927, 20.

¹²⁴ For information on the Nevada mission, see Mr. and Mrs. Warren Anderson, “Among the Indians,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 24 September 1927, 11.

¹²⁵ For examples of such articles, see Mrs. D.L. Brown, “Among the Indians of California,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 1 Feb 1930, page number unknown; J.D. Wells “A Veteran Enters the Lord’s Army,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 8 Feb 1930, 10; Author Unknown, “Shall the American Indian Know God?” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 5 April 1930, 12.

¹²⁶ J.D. Wells, “Among the American Indians,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 18 July 1931, 11.

At the same time, the AG's official focus fell on evangelizing the western tribes.¹²⁷ Two reasons appeared. During the early twentieth century, Indians emerged as romantic phenomena of the American West, a view that became cemented with the popularity of cowboy and Indian movies mid-century.¹²⁸ Second, the majority of the Eastern tribes either had been removed from their ancestral lands or had not yet recovered from hundreds of years of cultural destruction. In a practical sense, then, the AG needed to focus on the western tribes, because they were the largest intact groups. The one exception was the missionary work in upstate New York among the Mohawk, which led to strong Mohawk leadership in the AG. It appears, however, that in the earliest years of Pentecostalism, the bulk of this work was accomplished by itinerant nondenominational evangelists, some of whom were disciples of Aimee Semple McPherson.¹²⁹

Beginning in the 1930s, reports in the *PE* show that the longest-running missions and those that developed through early Native leadership centered in the western and midwestern states. In 1937, the AG decided to target the largest of the American Indian tribes, the Navajo.¹³⁰ Two missionary couples sent to live with the tribe reported in the *PE* of Navajo poverty and superstition. They sought, of course, to use the *PE* to raise more funds and recruit more missionaries for Indian work.¹³¹ In 1941, the *PE* carried a

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ See Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 128-153.

¹²⁹ Rodger Cree, Interview, Springfield, Missouri. 8 August 2006. Eventually the AG established a mission among the Mohawk, the Eastern Band of Cherokee and the Lumbees, but all the rest of the AG's missionary work among American Indians took place in the West and Midwest.

¹³⁰ Author Unknown, "A Forward Step to Reach the Navajo Indian," *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 11 July 1937, 9.

¹³¹ Mr. and Mrs. W.H. Solmes, "What About Our Neighbors—The Navajo Indians?" *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 9 April 1938, 6.

report on a mission founded in 1934 in Washington State on the Little Boston Indian Reservation.¹³² Also during that same year, the *PE* reported the beginning of a mission among the Kiowa people in Oklahoma.¹³³ Similar articles followed: a report of a mission among the Apache on the San Carlos reservation, begun in 1935, which diligent missionaries had grown and fostered.¹³⁴ In 1947, white evangelists launched a mission among Indians on the Fort Hall reservation in Idaho and another in Montana.¹³⁵ By 1949 reports surfaced of missionary work among tribes in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and North Dakota.¹³⁶

The 1940s, a decade of slow but steady growth among missions to American Indians, saw the emergence of a few important Native leaders and their most ardent white supporter. In 1947, the *PE* notes that George Effman and his wife were conducting evangelistic work among an Indian tribe in La Push, Washington.¹³⁷ What the *PE* does not say is that Effman was a Klamath Indian from the area near the border of California and Oregon. The earliest AG missionaries who worked in this region likely evangelized him.¹³⁸ Effman was not the only influential Native leader who emerged in this period. In April 1948, the *PE* recorded the first “Indian Conference,” a gathering of missionaries

¹³² Mr. and Mrs. Sivonen, “Among the American Indians in Washington,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 22 Feb 1941, 9.

¹³³ Author Unknown, “Kiowa Indian Work,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 26 April 1941, 9

¹³⁴ Author Unknown, “Revival Among the Apache Indians,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 8 August 1942, pg. number not given.

¹³⁵ Author Unknown, “Our Home Frontiers: Revivals Among the Indians,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 29 March 1947, 11.

¹³⁶ Author Unknown “God Moving on American Indians,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 7 May 1949, 12.

¹³⁷ Author Unknown, “A Forward Step to Reach the Navajo Indian,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 11 July 1937, 9.

¹³⁸ Deceased Minister Files, “George Effman,” from Application from Ordination, Record Group 8-27, Shelf Location 75/5/1, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

and American Indian Pentecostals on the San Carlos Apache reservation. The speakers included the young Navajo Charlie Lee, who had been saved at an Apache revival, and who, according to the *PE*, was “blessed with a fine voice to sing the gospel.”¹³⁹ The young Navajo student became an influential leader, but at that time, Lee was simply a young Pentecostal exhorter, a Navajo who had not yet fully realized his own identity as a Pentecostal Indian.

Three other major Pentecostal Indian leaders emerged in the 1940s. Although they went unmentioned in the *PE*, their ordination files and autobiographical writings tell their stories. One was Andrew Maracle, a Mohawk missionary to his own people and the uncle of John Maracle, the first American Indian to hold a seat on the AG’s Executive Presbytery.¹⁴⁰ A second was John McPherson, a mixed-blood Cherokee evangelist, who in 1979 became the first National Indian Representative.¹⁴¹ Rodger Cree, also Mohawk, was a third. Cree’s family was evangelized by a Canadian disciple of Sister Aimee Semple McPherson during Pentecostalism’s early decades. None of these first generation Indian missionaries were still alive in 2009 except for Cree, who remained active in evangelistic work to his people.¹⁴² All of these men—Effman, Lee, Maracle, McPherson, and Cree—ranked in the vanguard of Native leadership. They all received the Gospel at missions established early in the AG or other Pentecostal outreach to American Indians. All of this happened long before Melvin Hodges’s indigenous principle became a stated,

¹³⁹ Author Unknown, “First Indian Convention,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 10 April 1948, 11.

¹⁴⁰ Deceased Minister Files, “Andrew Maracle,” from Application from Ordination, Record Group 8-27, Shelf Location 76/5/3, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

¹⁴¹ John T. McPherson and Phil Taylor, *Chief: My Story* (Tulsa: Carbondale Assembly of God, 1995).

¹⁴² Rodger Cree, Interview, Springfield, Mo., 8 August 2006.

public goal in the 1970s. The early emergence of these Indian leaders shows that some white missionaries encouraged their Native converts to join the ministry. So while paternalism plagued the missionaries of the 1950s and 1960s and was, no doubt, also prevalent among some of the earliest white missionaries, some also practiced the ideas behind the indigenous principle and helped develop early American Indian leaders.

Though most of the missionaries from this period were men and the American Indian leadership remained almost exclusively male, the most important white supporter of the indigenous principle and Native leadership was a woman. Alta Washburn arrived on the White River Apache reservation in 1948 after feeling a deep and supernatural call to ministry among American Indians.¹⁴³ She became their most ardent white defender and for her era proved radically progressive. Washburn never would have defined herself as a feminist, but her unshakable belief in the power of the Holy Spirit allowed her to argue in favor of Native leadership more forcefully than any of her white male colleagues and certainly more than any contemporary Pentecostal woman. Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, readers of the *PE* never even knew her first name—she appeared as “Mrs. Charles Washburn”—but her importance to the development of Native leadership cannot be overstated. Like Lee, Washburn functioned as a major figure in the AG, and also like her Native brothers, she was initially overlooked by the growing hierarchy in Springfield. Yet she joined forces with American Indian leaders to confront the AG and forced it to be true to its own indigenous principle.

¹⁴³ Alta Washburn, *Trail to the Tribes*, (Springfield Mo.: self-published, 1990), 42.

2.6 Conclusion

The early years of the AG brimmed with contradictions. The denomination came out of a movement that eschewed denominationalism. Pentecostals considered the idea of faith missions to be of utmost importance, but a missionary program developed to oversee them. Early Pentecostals created a detailed theology regarding the indigenous principle but found it difficult to implement in both foreign and home missions. Early Pentecostals were idealists who longed for the blessings of the primitive church, but they also approached the world in a remarkably pragmatic way. They wanted the Holy Spirit to lead them to be true Christians—people who would bring Christ to all, but without the cultural insensitivity that previous Protestant missionaries had shown. And yet, time after time, AG missionaries stumbled. While they longed for otherworldly guidance, their problems were stubbornly of this world, and they needed to deal with real world prejudices and jealousies.

The earliest years of Pentecostalism, with its defiance of the rules set by the American Protestant mainline, were raucous and exhilarating. The first years allowed for a degree of racial mixing, the occasional leadership of women, and the ability of ordinary people to become extraordinary after experiencing the gifts of the Holy Ghost. For Pentecostals, this was an empowering era, one that looked forward with idealism and hope. While that era quickly faded away as Pentecostal groups split and separated themselves into denominations, the spark of anti-authoritarianism that the Holy Spirit gave to converts remained. Even as the AG became a denomination with all the

bureaucracy and problems of a denomination, the individualist spirit of its people remained, and indeed, helped them hold the denomination to its ideals.

The most important of those ideals was the indigenous principle. Pentecostal theologians who were looking for a way to understand and approach missions adopted this idea, which Rufus Anderson had developed in the nineteenth century. Fully developed in Pentecostal form by Melvin Hodges, the indigenous principle was important in the evolution of the earliest American Indian missionaries. Without some knowledge of it, white missionaries would not have encouraged promising Indians to go to Bible school or consider careers as pastors or missionaries. Yet, while individual missionaries practiced the indigenous principle out of belief or pragmatism or both, the denomination as a whole did not make it official practice until many decades later. The early efforts toward realizing the indigenous principle in later years helped initiate a Pentecostal-Indian identity among converts.

Money was also an important factor in the history of AG missions. The need for funds forced the AG to develop denominational oversight in both its foreign and home missions. While both mission departments remained loosely organized for the first few decades of the denomination's life, they were eventually galvanized into structured departments that not only raised money but also determined standards for education and ordination. As the Department of Home Missions became more formalized and structured, it also suffered more from paternalism.

While the AG was dealing with these early contradictions, white missionaries trekked to the remote reservations of the American West and established mission stations,

gained converts and encouraged early indigenous leadership. We know little about these early pioneers, much less than we do about their overseas counterparts, but they established the traditions for AG missionary work to American Indians. Those early, unknown missionaries trained the first generation of Native leaders, men who came to the forefront of the indigenous church movement in the late 1960s and 1970s. But before the AG could move forward, it had to work on the problems of paternalism and cultural misunderstanding. So although Melvin Hodges could teach the indigenous principle during those years at Central Bible Institute, many white missionaries out in the field struggled to overcome paternalism and ethnocentrism. Somehow, they had to come to terms with their purpose as missionaries—a purpose that would remain undefined until the American Indian leaders began to assert themselves as Pentecostal Indians who deserved a voice in forming their chosen religious identity.

3. Chapter 2: White Missionaries and the Twin Problems of Ethnocentrism and Paternalism in the 1950s and 1960s

Early in her ministry to the American Indians of the desert Southwest, AG missionary Alta Washburn experienced a rare moment of doubt. As her husband carefully navigated the treacherous dirt road that snaked through a desert canyon in northern Arizona, Sister Washburn lay on the floorboards of the car, crying out to God, confessing all of her fear and doubt. She wept, “Oh God, what are we doing here? This country is so strange and terrifying. And Lord, I’m not sure the Indian people will accept us. How can I preach to them when I can’t speak their language? I’m frightened and discouraged Lord. Please strengthen and increase my faith right now Lord.”¹ In Sister Washburn’s mind, her doubts and frightened prayers were products of Satan’s “taunts.” She continued lying on the floor until she heard a response from God, who assured her that her life’s work and calling was to spread the Gospel among the American Indians. Heartened, Sister Washburn sat up and told herself, “I had heard from my Lord. Nothing could keep me from obeying Him and fulfilling His call on my life.”²

In June 1955, Brother and Sister Rehwinkel, home missionaries to the Menominee in Wisconsin, published an article in the *PE*. While the article served mainly

¹ Alta Washburn, Trail to the Tribes (Springfield, Mo.: self-published, 1990), 1.

² Ibid.

as a report on their mission in order to raise more funds, it also contained language that indicated the ethnocentrism³ that prevailed among white missionaries of the era. In talking about a group of traditional Indians, the Rehwinkels described their “pagan” customs.

At their ceremonies they beat drums and dance all night. Hours are spent in feasting and sitting in a circle while they pass out a drug called “peyote.” Strange to say this ritual is called “prayer.” These Indians, in bondage to dope, drink, and tobacco, desperately need the message of Christ, the Deliverer.⁴

By today’s standards, this language is troubling, but we need to consider the context. The article revealed the Pentecostal worldview: traditional Indian religion, especially peyote, was of the Devil, and American Indians needed Christ to keep them from such sin. The Pentecostal audience that the Rehwinkels addressed expected this sort of insider language because they viewed themselves as spiritual warriors for Christ. In Pentecostals’ minds, there was only one way to God—their way.

The contrast between Washburn and Rehwinkel shows two sides of the white Pentecostal missionary experience. On the one hand, Alta Washburn shows how the

³ Ethnocentrism is the belief that one’s own culture is superior to another culture. Anthropologist Franz Boaz coined the term. In short, ethnocentrism is the assumption that one’s own culture is normative. Paternalism is the assumption that others needed to be changed in order to fit into what is perceived as the normative culture. Ethnocentrism commonly led to paternalism, but the two concepts are analytically distinct. In this instance, it means that the AG structured its Home Missions Division to be run by white ministers, who believed that they knew what was best for American Indian converts and leaders. White AG leaders did not allow Native ministers to have any power in the running of the Department of Home Missions.

⁴ Brother and Sister Norman Rehwinkel, “Indian Missions in Wisconsin,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 5 June 1955, 13.

restorationist⁵ ideals of Pentecostalism came to life in the work of a white missionary. Because of her belief in the indigenous church, Sister Washburn managed to avoid most (though not all) of the pitfalls of ethnocentrism and demonstrated exceptional Pentecostal pragmatism. On the other hand, the Rehwinkels' words show the more common approach of the white missionary to American Indians. This is not to say that Washburn was a "good" missionary and that the Rehwinkels were "bad"—rather they revealed the ambiguities of the white Pentecostal missionary experience. Missionaries were complicated people. They arrived on the reservation with their own beliefs, understandings, and character quirks. This study strives to go beyond questions of

⁵ The term "restorationist" is often used in conjunction with the Campbellite movement, which wished to restore the ecclesial structure of the early church. See Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, "From Primitive Church to Protestant Nation: The Millennial Odyssey of Alexander Campbell," in Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630-1875 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1988), 170-187. Scholars of Pentecostalism employ this term differently to talk about Pentecostalism's emphasis on the miraculous nature of the first century church. In the case of Pentecostalism, "restorationist tendencies" meant a longing for the healings, miracles, prophecy, and the gift of tongues—gifts that they believe were not restricted to the first century church. This tendency often called the "primitivist impulse" within Pentecostalism. As explained by historian Grant Wacker, "Pentecostalism in all parts of the world is bonded by a powerful conviction that the miraculous, wonder-working gospel of the New Testament is just as real at the end of the twentieth century as it was in the first." Restoring the miraculous nature of Christianity was one of the hallmarks of the early Pentecostalism of the white (and Native) AG missionaries. In this chapter, that is the context in which I use that the term "restorationist." For more on the restorationist impulse in Pentecostalism, see Grant Wacker, "Playing for Keeps: The Primitivist Impulse in Early Pentecostalism," in The American Quest for the Primitive Church, ed. Richard T. Hughes (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 196-219. Edith Blumhofer expands this understanding of the restorationist impulse in Pentecostalism in her work on AG missions. According to Blumhofer, Pentecostal restorationist dreams went beyond restoring the signs and miracles of the first century church. Referencing the first AG director of missions, Blumhofer states, "Flower's approach captured the pervasive, sometimes unacknowledged persuasion that somehow Pentecostals were called to do something different from other mission agencies. Restorationist dreams (though modified by the 1920s) sustained the sense that the Assemblies of God had been charged with a solemn and distinctive mandate, a mandate that legitimated its missionary efforts and distinguished them." Pentecostals saw themselves as different from other Protestant missionaries. They were to spread the Gospel only, and not meddle with earthly affairs, in order to "restore" missions to its purest focus. This is the main reason that Pentecostals rarely engaged the U.S. government's Indian policy, in contrast to nineteenth century Mainline missionaries. For more on Blumhofer's argument, see Edith L. Blumhofer, Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 155-156.

whether the missionaries were “good” or “bad” and whether they should have been on the reservation in the first place. The fact is, they were there, and their history is entwined with the history of the AG’s Native Pentecostal leadership.

In the 1950s and 1960s, interest in missions to American Indians surged within the AG. Most of those missionaries were white Americans who carried certain cultural misconceptions. Although some missionaries embraced the AG’s indigenous principle, most early white missionaries struggled with racial stereotypes and their own ethnocentrism, as well as with the logistical problems that confronted them in their mission work. Those who eventually realized that the development of indigenous leadership was essential to the AG’s experiment arrived at that conclusion through a combination of trial and error coupled with pragmatism. Problematic white missionary interaction with American Indians marked this period, and many white missionaries’ were unwilling to trust American Indian converts to run their own churches, camp meetings, or revivals.

This chapter focuses on the 1950s and 1960s as “building block” years in the AG’s missions to American Indians and specifically addresses the experiences of white missionaries. Rapidly growing numbers of American Indian missionaries also served their own people during this period, but since their experience differed dramatically from that of white missionaries, it receives separate treatment in the next chapter. The 1950s and 1960s marked the two crucial decades in which missionaries, through a variety of evangelization efforts, laid down the foundation for a potential indigenous church within the AG. White missionaries traveled to remote reservations where they built churches and

made converts, hosted camp meetings and revivals, and began to build a base that also profited indigenous converts and missionaries. During the early 1950s, white missionaries emphasized dramatic acts of healing as means to prove the power of the Holy Spirit. These acts often took place as resurrections of the dead or spontaneous healings from severe illness or injury. The surge in interest in such forms of healing pointed to a greater trend in American Pentecostalism during this era—the wave of charismatic revivals that focused on public acts of healing. For white missionaries of this era, the Devil reigned as an ever-present being who constantly threatened to undo their work. I explore how that belief contributed to ethnocentrism.⁶

First, I wish to paint a demographic and prosopographical picture of the white AG missionaries, place Pentecostal missionary work within the context of the history of missions to Indians in the U.S., and show how its restorationist impulse made it unique among Protestant missions to Indians. From there, I discuss the daily difficulties of trying to win converts, build churches, organize camp meetings, and implement all the other mechanics of conversion that the AG missionaries employed in their work. My aim is to offer a picture of the daily grind of missionary life. I close by using all-Indian camp meetings and the white missionary approach to the “demonic” (Native religions) as case studies in order to show how paternalism and ethnocentrism affected the realization of the indigenous principle. In sum, this chapter serves three purposes: it places Pentecostal

⁶ White and Native missionaries differed on both the issues of healing and traditional religion. Native missionaries put less emphasis on physical healing and more on a form of cultural healing. Native missionaries also did not usually regard traditional religion as something demonic, but rather as something that was no longer working for their people. I explore these differences more fully in the following chapter.

missionaries within their historical context and discusses what made Pentecostalism unique in the history of Christian missions to Indians, it describes the paternalism and ethnocentrism that white AG missionaries brought to the reservation and it shows in some detail how they experienced life on the reservation among different cultures and peoples.

3.1 *The Missionaries*

Married men made up the majority of early white Pentecostal missionaries, while their wives assisted them in their call to the American Indian home missions field. A few unmarried women, as well as Sister Washburn, who appears to have been the only married female missionary who was not assisting her husband, completed the missionary demographic. (Washburn's husband usually held a regular job, and while he supported her missionary endeavors, he never served as an appointed missionary himself.) Most of the missionaries were "old-stock whites."⁷ They came from working-class backgrounds and hailed from the American Midwest or South, two regions where American Pentecostalism already had entrenched itself by the mid-twentieth century. Sister Washburn fits this profile. Born in West Virginia, she spent most of her young adult life in Ohio before she permanently moved to the American Southwest.⁸ Other examples include Brother Norman Rehwinkle, a white missionary to the Great Lakes tribes, who

⁷ Grant Wacker, Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 200.

⁸ Deceased Minister Files, "Alta Washburn," from Application for Ordination, Record Group 8-27, Shelf Location 75/5/2, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin,⁹ and Sister Pauline Nelson, a white missionary to Southwestern tribes who was born and reared in Aurora, Missouri.¹⁰ These are only three of those who served as AG missionaries, but they are representative of the white missionaries of this period.¹¹

Most white missionaries to Native Americans were modestly educated.¹² Commonly, evangelists such as Sister Washburn had only completed the ninth grade,¹³ while many others did not possess even that much schooling. Brother Burt Parker, for example, only completed the sixth grade.¹⁴ A few, such as Sister Virginia Krider, finished high school,¹⁵ and almost none attended a Bible college. This pattern reveals the missionaries' time and place as much as their social status. The majority of the AG missionaries who evangelized during the 1950s and 1960s had been born close to the beginning of the twentieth century. By the 1930s and 1940s, the AG was just beginning to get the Bible college network off the ground, so it is not surprising that many of the

⁹ Deceased Minister Files, "Norman Rehwinkle," from Application for Ordination, Record Group 8-20-07, Shelf Location 75/4/3, Flower Pentecosta Heritage Center.

¹⁰ Deceased Minister Files, "Pauline, Nelson." from Application for Ordination, ." Record Group 8-2-1063, Shelf Location 73/8/1, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

¹¹ I came to this conclusion after reviewing the Deceased Missionary Files of missionaries who served in this era. Although the AG had about 100 white missionaries to Native peoples during this period, they did not have files on all of the missionaries, so I tried to track down missionaries by using those whose names were mentioned in the *Pentecostal Evangel* or in other correspondence. What information I could find is appears in Appendix A, which gives name, place of birth, education and year of ordination.

¹² It is well established in Pentecostal scholarship that most early Pentecostal missionaries, foreign and home, lacked formal educations. The historian Allan Anderson calls them "Persons of Average Ability" in his work. See Allan Anderson, Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism (New York: Orbis Books, 2007), 260-289.

¹³ Deceased Minister Files, "Alta Washburn," from Application for Ordination, Record Group 8-27, Shelf Location 75/5/2, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

¹⁴ Deceased Minister Files, "Burt Parker," from Application for Ordination, Record Group 8-27, Shelf Location 75/8/2, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

¹⁵ Deceased Minister Files, "Virginia Krider," from Application for Ordination, Record Group 8-27, Shelf Location 76/7/2, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

early missionaries did not have the opportunity to attend.¹⁶ Finally, an advanced education was not essential to white missionaries' work, according to the democratic and pragmatic nature of Pentecostal missions. As long as missionaries were literate, possessed a working knowledge of Bible basics, and were not afraid of public speaking, their success rested more on personality, ingenuity, and ability to connect to others.

Finally, the men and women who became missionaries shared a common motivation. All white AG missionaries understood themselves as called by God. Sister Washburn was serving a small church in Ohio during the 1940s when she heard of the trials and tribulations of missionary work among American Indians through the letters of AG friends engaged in such missions. In her autobiography, Sister Washburn recounted how she felt a growing "burden" to work among Native Americans. In typical Pentecostal style, she prayed for guidance, and, in her mind, received an answer.

"Now is the time for you to take the Gospel to the American Indians," He said. "You know now where they are. Go home and prepare yourself. Tell your husband and your church and I will make the way plain for you." With this communication from the Lord, an intense love for American Indians flooded my soul. Now that I had a confirmation of my call from God, I knew I must take the next step—a step of faith.¹⁷

Because of her faith in God's call, Sister Washburn faced her husband and family and persuaded them that they needed to leave their cozy home and comfortable pastorate in Ohio for an unknown life in the harsh Arizona desert. Sister Washburn and her family

¹⁶ For more on the early years of AG Bible schools, see Edith L. Blumhofer, The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 1:313-342.

¹⁷ Washburn, 13.

probably possessed some inkling of the hardship that they were about to face, but on arrival at the San Carlos Apache mission, the reality of their situation hit them. Sister Washburn recalled, “The first night after we had gone to bed, we heard a loud Boom Boom coming from drums in the distance. The dreadful noise was accompanied by loud shouts and chants. It sounded much too close.”¹⁸ The noise was coming from a traditional Apache “sing”—a healing ceremony for the sick. Realizing what she and her family would encounter, Sister Washburn reflected, “Mixed emotions filled our hearts as we were now in the land of our calling...This was the real thing. We realized we had to prepare ourselves with God’s help for a transition to this strange environment and people.”¹⁹ At that moment, Sister Washburn realized that her burden for missionary work among the American Indians would be a heavy one indeed.

Obstacles and hardships that the calling presented were common and even celebrated in Pentecostal literature, such as self-published autobiographies like Washburn’s or the *Pentecostal Evangel*. Partisans saw these difficulties as a test of one’s faith in God and in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Consider the missionary work of Pearl Habig and Lorraine Hampton, two single Pentecostal women who felt a call in 1951 to the Arapahoe and Shoshone reservation in Wyoming. The two women arrived on the reservation at an inopportune moment. “It was sub-zero weather and Christmas was near. It seemed an inauspicious time to begin their efforts.”²⁰ Both women doubted their call,

¹⁸ Washburn, 17.

¹⁹ Washburn, 17-18.

²⁰ Author Unknown, “Indian Missions in Wyoming,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 7 March 1954, 10.

but decided to put their faith in God. Their reward was a small but active group of converts. Again and again in Pentecostal literature a “burden” or “call” to missionary work was understood as coming from God. Following that call was therefore a test of faith. A missionary’s “call” was theologically non-negotiable. Few who answered the call ever looked back.

3.2 A Brief History of Missions to American Indians

Pentecostal missions came on the heels of hundreds of years of missionary work to American Indians. Like some of their predecessors, Pentecostals adopted indigenous church techniques, but unlike mainline Protestants, they brought to American Indians a distinctly restorationist version of the Gospel. Understanding those similarities and differences allow us to place Pentecostal missionary work in its historical time and place and fit it into the larger picture of American Indian mission history. In this section, I give a brief overview of the history of missions to American Indians, beginning with Catholic Spanish and French missions in the seventeenth century and ending with the AG missions in the twentieth century. I will only highlight the main ideas and points of scholarship that are essential to understanding the missionary tradition that gave birth to Pentecostal missions and highlight how Pentecostalism was both similar to and different from the prevailing American home missionary impulse.

Spanish missions to the Pueblos began in the seeming glow of the conquest of New Spain’s indigenous peoples. In 1524, Catholic missionaries from the order of St. Francis arrived with Hernando Cortez’s men and witnessed the spectacular fall of the Aztec empire. In place of that “terrible” heathen culture, the Franciscans labored to

inculcate in the Native and mestizo peoples their form of medieval Catholicism.²¹ By the end of the sixteenth century, the Franciscans received reports of a vast mission field to the north, which they correctly assumed held large numbers of non-Christian indigenous peoples. Looking for new challenges, possible martyrdoms, and glory for the Church, Spanish Franciscans set their sights on the peoples of Northern New Spain.²²

In 1598, Franciscans accompanied Don Juan de Onate to the banks of the Rio Grande. There they encountered Native agriculturalists who lived in settled towns, and they gave the name “Pueblos” to both the towns and the people.²³ Although curious, the Pueblos were wary of the Spanish invaders and some groups outright resisted. Perturbed by Spanish demands for corn and dismayed by the barbarian customs of the invaders, members of the Acoma Pueblo attacked a Spanish contingent led by Don Juan de Zaldivar, leaving Zaldivar and twelve other men dead.²⁴ The Spanish responded with a swift and fatal brutality in order to make an example of the Acoma people.²⁵ The Spanish had hoped that their treatment of the Acoma would foster less resistance by the Pueblos, and they were correct in that assessment. Although the colony limped along, plagued by supply and personnel problems, the Franciscans planted their missions among the various Pueblos that dotted the desert landscape.

²¹ Ramon A. Gutierrez, When Jesus Came, The Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 46.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 45.

²⁴ Ibid., 53.

²⁵ Ibid., 53-54. Approximately 800 Indians were killed, including women and children, and 80 men and 500 women and children were taken prisoner to stand trial at Santo Domingo. There, the Spanish found them all guilty. Their harsh punishment mandated that all men over the age of twelve were condemned to slavery and lost a foot. Women over the age of twelve also were sent into slavery for twenty years, and all children under twelve were given to the Franciscans to serve as their wards and servants.

In order to establish a foothold, the Franciscans established a model for their mission work. They erected a church in the center of each Pueblo, and availed themselves of all the tools of material Catholicism. By displaying crosses, using grand chalices and plates for communion, and constructing altars, the Franciscans tried to impress the local Natives. Lavish play-acting communicated the Gospel message. The Franciscans emphasized their ability to heal the sick, mobilize Spanish forces, and provide local Pueblos with foods, of which they often took control upon entering the Pueblo.²⁶ The Franciscans denigrated Pueblo religion—they destroyed the kivas and sacred objects, forbade Pueblo ceremonies and dances, and frowned on Pueblo sexuality.²⁷ They aimed to destroy all semblance of Pueblo culture and religion and to turn the Pueblos into good Spanish Christians, expecting them to learn Spanish, adopt Spanish dress and customs, and embrace Spanish Catholicism. The friars often relied heavily on translators (although some did learn the local language) and discouraged any mixing of Pueblo practices and Catholicism. Their deep rooting in the mystical theology of St. Francis also meant that they practiced a strict, penitential form of Catholicism.²⁸ Yet the Pueblos continued to practice their beliefs in secret, and in 1680 they revolted and expelled the Franciscans and their Spanish colonizers.²⁹ After the Reconquista of 1692, when the Franciscans came back to the Pueblos, the friars no longer found themselves able to enforce their beliefs as

²⁶ Ibid., 63.

²⁷ Ibid., 39-94.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ For a complete history of the events leading up to the Pueblo Revolt see Andrew Knaut, The Pueblo Revolt of 1680: Conquest and Resistance in Seventeenth-Century New Mexico (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).

harshly as before. To this day, while some Pueblos practice a blend of Catholic-Pueblo beliefs, traditional Pueblo religions endure.

The Spanish friars were not the only Catholic missionaries to come to the New World. In the same century that the Spanish came to the Southwest, the French arrived in New France (the St. Lawrence River valley and Great Lakes region). Like the Spanish, they originally came looking for riches. Unlike the Spanish, they sought their wealth through fishing and the fur trade, whereas the Spanish wanted actual gold.³⁰ The French story mirrors the Spanish story in that they encountered Native peoples who initially resisted. Once Champlain founded Quebec in 1608, they decided to figure out how to deal with the local Indians.³¹ Because the French settled into trading towns and hoped to dominate the fur trade in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River valley, they wanted to be safe from Native attacks and wars. In fact, they needed the Natives if they were to have access to the best fur and hunting areas. Originally, Recollect and Jesuit missionaries struck out to civilize the local Indians. The Recollects, who were essentially French Franciscans, met little success and ceded much of the missionary work to the Jesuits during the French-Canadian colonial period. The Jesuits, famously known as “Black Robes,” pioneered a new form of Catholic missionary work.³²

The Jesuit style of evangelism hinged on their willingness to go out among both settled and nomadic bands of Native peoples and to adopt their language and manner of

³⁰ James Axtell, The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 23.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

³² *Ibid.*, 45-70.

living. They sought knowledge in order to further Native conversions to Christianity. Such a lifestyle was not for the faint of heart. Among the most educated men of their day, the Jesuits trained in rhetoric, theology, languages, and the classical humanities.³³ Their sharp minds and willingness to innovate distinguished them from other Catholic missionaries. Jesuits, however, were not immune to the Native perception of them—often they appeared odd to Natives because of their dress, celibacy, and other customs. As historian James Axtell points out: “From the Indian perspective, their personal appearance was truly repulsive, their social behavior aberrant, and their clothes impractical and socially confused.”³⁴

Initially seen as barbarians, the Jesuits quickly gained grudging appreciation from the Indians. Most Jesuits learned to harness Native language and rhetoric, which allowed them to take part in Native councils.³⁵ They learned the importance of gift giving to create alliances and of bravery in war and captivity.³⁶ The Jesuits used their knowledge of astronomy and the physical world to challenge medicine men, and they willingly fused some aspects of Native culture with Catholicism.³⁷ In order to change Native culture, the Jesuits sought to understand every aspect of it. Their emphasis on the supernatural powers of God, on the presence of God (in this case, through communion), and on bodily healing through faith mirrored the some of the ideals that Pentecostal missionaries brought to Natives centuries later. French Jesuits remained among the Native peoples in

³³ Ibid., 75.

³⁴ Ibid., 80.

³⁵ Ibid., 87-88.

³⁶ Ibid., 86, 89.

³⁷ Ibid., 104-111.

New France until war and the changing of colonial powers diminished their influence. As Catholicism became more common in America, European Jesuits were dispatched to convert a variety of American Indian groups in the far West.³⁸

While the Catholic Church was the first Christian group to evangelize American Indians, the arrival of Englishmen in the New World signaled the arrival of Protestantism. The Calvinism of Puritan theology brought a different form of Christianity to northeastern Native peoples.³⁹ Their form was not nearly as supernatural or material as either French or Spanish Catholicism. Although Puritan ministers were often men of learning and erudition, they could not compete with the adaptable Jesuits who harnessed Indian knowledge in order to change Indian culture. English Protestantism (especially of the Puritan variety) depended upon literacy, and literacy meant establishing schools.⁴⁰ Instead of portraying their religion as a cosmic force full of ritual power, like the Catholics, Puritans offered a literate, studious, and austere form of Christianity. It was a hard sell.

Puritans targeted the youngest members of Native society hoping to bring about conversions. This approach differed from the French Jesuit style of focusing on converting the powerful in the tribe. Puritan missionaries constructed schools in praying towns and encouraged Indians to come together to live like Englishmen. Some tribes welcomed the opportunity because diseases and war had decimated their numbers, while

³⁸ Henry Warner Bowden, American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Cultural Conflict (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 185-187.

³⁹ Axtell, 179.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 179.

others shunned the praying town and schools.⁴¹ Perhaps the most famous Puritan missionary was John Eliot, who defined his career by his work among the Native peoples of Massachusetts.⁴²

The Puritans, however, were not the only English group to send missionaries to Native peoples—the Church of England also set up boarding schools for Indian children in the middle colonies.⁴³ Like their Puritan counterparts, Anglican missionaries stressed education. Also present in the Northeastern colonies in the eighteenth century were several Moravian missions. Although small in number, these missionaries took a different approach.⁴⁴ Their religion emphasized “the saving power of Jesus’s blood. Through a rich course of rituals, including baptism, communion, songs and prayers, the power of the blood could be accessed and directed toward the particular needs of the sinner.”⁴⁵ However, the Moravians constituted a small minority in colonial New England, meaning that the Anglicans or their strict theological cousins, the Puritans, carried out most of the missionary work. English missionaries made little headway among the Native peoples of New England.

Missionary work among Native peoples ebbed and flowed. The nineteenth century, however, signaled a concerted change in the Protestant approach to missions. In order to facilitate better missionary work overall, denominations began to construct

⁴¹ Ibid., 219-220.

⁴² For more on Eliot, see Axtell, 218-241.

⁴³ For more on the Church of England missions/schools, see Axtell, 179-217.

⁴⁴ For more on the Moravian missions, see Rachel Wheeler, To Live Upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 6.

mission boards so they could organize their efforts toward American Indians and in foreign lands. The major missionary societies included the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), founded in 1810, the Baptist Missionary Union, founded in 1814, and the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in 1819.⁴⁶ Of the three, the ABCFM became the most powerful missionary society, and it left an indelible mark on the history of missions to Native peoples in the U.S.

During the colonial and revolutionary era, “America” remained an undefined concept. English, Spanish, and French missionaries wished to civilize Native peoples, whom they viewed as savages, and turn them into good Englishmen, Spaniards or Frenchmen. After the Revolutionary War, missionary work shifted toward shaping Native peoples to become more “American,” which at the time was the Jeffersonian ideal of the small yeoman farmer. George Washington promised Indians who became civilized farmers citizenship once they became fully Christian.⁴⁷

Protestant missionary societies layered their various forms of Protestantism on top of this yeoman ideal and sent out Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and Episcopal missionaries to a variety of tribes. Since the government, under Washington’s policy, encouraged missionary work, Protestant missionaries established stations in Indian settlements and subsequently became deeply embroiled in the everyday politics of life

⁴⁶ C.L. Higham, Noble, Wretched and Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians in Canada and the United States, 1820-1900 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 14.

⁴⁷ William McLoughlin, Champions of the Cherokees: Evan and John B. Jones (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 10.

among the tribes. During the War of 1812, many Indian tribes in the interior East, who were tired of Americans encroaching on their land, supported and fought on the side of the British.⁴⁸ After the war, interest in missions to Native peoples surged, as well as animosity because they had supported the British. The election of Andrew Jackson in 1828 only deepened the anti-Indian mood in American society. Since much of the rich land of the Southeast remained under the control of a variety of Indian tribes, “it seemed imperative to the growth of prosperity of the new nation that they should be removed to make way for those who could exploit the land to its fullest.”⁴⁹

Missionaries found themselves caught in the middle of the government’s Americanization and removal policies. The most famous example of this dilemma was the Cherokee tribe. Initially a variety of Protestants evangelized them, including Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and Moravian groups. Eager not to lose their land, some Cherokees embraced the white ways that they judged were most useful to them, including the ownership of slaves, intermarriage, farming, education, and, to some extent, Christianity. While a variety of Christian missionaries worked among the Cherokee, the Baptists were most closely connected. This resulted mainly from the work of the Baptist missionary Evan Jones, who was the only missionary who continued to actively work against removal after Jackson’s declaration of the removal policy in 1830.⁵⁰

Evan Jones proved an innovative missionary—he encouraged the building of schools, supported the training of Native clergy, and helped disseminate the Sequoyan

⁴⁸ Ibid., 11-14.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 17.

alphabet. Like any missionary, Jones believed that his (Baptist) beliefs offered the pathway to God and that Native people needed to become more Americanized. Yet Jones also felt strongly that the Cherokees should keep their land and have a say in their religious destiny. In his insistence on indigenous churches and the development of indigenous leadership, he implemented a successful model that other Protestant groups, including the AG, would later try to emulate.⁵¹ And when the Cherokees were removed and forced on the Trail of Tears, Evan Jones accompanied them to witness the cruelty of government and to minister to the Baptist Cherokees. Once in Oklahoma, he and his son John Jones continued the work of constructing indigenous churches. Evan Jones, like AG missionary Sister Washburn, believed that the best evangelists were Native evangelists, and that only a Christianity steeped in Native culture would flourish.⁵²

The Baptists were not the only denomination that had to deal with the aftermath of government policy or that tried to shape policy. Presbyterian missionaries among the Dakota and the Nez Perce faced the consequences of the Dakota War of 1862 and the Nez Perce's loss of ancestral homelands in the Treaties of 1855 and 1863.⁵³ One of the results was a Native-run religious revival among the prisoners of the Dakota wars.⁵⁴ Like the Baptists, the Presbyterians emphasized the training of Native missionaries. Also like

⁵¹ Jones was not the first American Protestant missionary to emphasize indigenous leadership. John Eliot and the Puritans also tried to create an indigenous clergy, as did many other Protestant denominations. However, Jones embraced a more egalitarian (Baptist) polity, and his willingness to work with Native preachers meant that the model of indigenous clergy worked better for him than it had for his predecessors.

⁵² For a detailed study of Jones, his indigenous church methods, and life with the Cherokee see McLoughlin, Champions of the Cherokee.

⁵³ Bonnie Sue Lewis, Creating Christian Indians: Native Clergy in the Presbyterian Church (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 48, 52.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

the Baptists, they experienced moderate success with training Native clergy and leadership.⁵⁵

The short-lived “peace policy” of President Grant represented the apex of missionary influence in federal Indian policy. Beset by war and the constant breaking of treaties by the U.S. government, Native people found themselves caught between their need to hold onto their ancestral lands and land-greedy settlers who wished to move west. The government, desiring to contain Native people as well as to gain access to their lands, heeded the advice of missionaries, who claimed that unscrupulous Indian agents, land grabbers, and un-Christian settlers were aggravating the so-called “Indian Problem.” The resulting peace policy, promulgated around 1870 (the exact date is debatable), stressed that Native peoples should be placed on reservations where they could be protected from unscrupulous white people and taught the elements of civilization. Missionaries supported the reservation system, influenced the selection of Indian agents, and participated in the building of schools and churches.⁵⁶ The peace policy was the “conscious intent of the government to turn to religious groups and religiously minded men for the formulation and administration of Indian policy.”⁵⁷ In the warfare between the U.S. Army and many Plains tribes that preceded the peace policy, Generals Sherman and Sheridan had urged a form of total war, which included targeting enemy Native men,

⁵⁵ For more on Presbyterian missions, see Lewis.

⁵⁶ Francis Paul Prucha, American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian 1865-1890 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 31-32.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

women and children for “extermination.”⁵⁸ In this context, “the effort to confine the Indians to reservations and civilize them was the response of the era’s liberal humanitarians to the army’s ongoing slaughter of them.”⁵⁹ Instead of outright extermination, missionaries supported a peace policy that led to bans on Native religion, the creation of the federal boarding school system, and the belief famously voiced by Richard Henry Pratt founder of the Carlisle Indian School, that the government had to “kill the Indian to save the man.”

The renewal of war on the plains and the constant demand for Indian lands meant that the peace policy ended before it really started. Missionaries had influence in their respective churches and they often ran religious and federal boarding schools, but they eventually found themselves lost in the shuffle over how to deal with what became known as “the Indian Problem.” Some Christian leaders and missionaries continued to debate and influence government Indian policy, such as Lyman Abbott, who as a member of the Lake Mohonk Friends of the Indian Conference advocated radical assimilation and the allotment of Indian lands.⁶⁰ Once allotment did occur, other missionaries faced the aftermath among tribes that were psychically destroyed by the loss of their lands, such as the Episcopalians among the Ojibwes of White Earth.⁶¹ Although missionary

⁵⁸ Clyde Holler, Black Elk’s Religion: The Sun Dance and Lakota Catholicism (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 111.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 146.

⁶¹ For more on the Episcopal mission missions to Ojibwes, see Michael McNally, Ojibwe Singers: Hymns, Grief, and A Native Culture In Motion (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). For an explanation of the Dawes allotment act, see Francis Paul Prucha, The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 2:659-673.

involvement with Native peoples began to decline by the turn of the twentieth century, missionaries remained on many reservations, running religious boarding schools as well as attempting to spread the Gospel.

Missionary influence over Indian policy had decidedly faded by the early twentieth century. There is perhaps no better example of this than the missionary G.E.E. Lindquist, who fought against the radical and progressive policies of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Director John Collier.⁶² Collier's eventual triumph over Lindquist and his faction reversed many of the assimilationist policies, including allotment, introduced the Indian New Deal, and cleared the way for Native peoples to practice their Native religions, including banned dances such as the Sun Dance.⁶³ In this environment of more progressive reforms, the AG began to dispatch missionaries to the reservation.

The AG fits neatly into the history of American missions in some ways, but also differs in others. AG missionaries, like their predecessors, came from white American culture. Yet they worked among people who by the early- to mid-twentieth century were attempting to save their own separate, distinct Native American culture. That the two groups clashed should come as no surprise. As historian Robert Berkhofer asserts, cultural misunderstanding between missionaries and American Indians was inevitable.⁶⁴ Missionary work was inherently paternalistic and ethnocentric. When AG missionaries

⁶² For more on the relationship between Lindquist and Collier, see David W. Daily, Battle for the BIA: GEE Lindquist and the Missionary Crusade Against John Collier (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2004).

⁶³ For more on the Indian New Deal, see Prucha, The Great Father, II:940-1012.

⁶⁴ Robert J. Berkhofer, Salvation and the Savage: An Anylasis of Protestant Missions and the American Indian Response, 1787-1862 (Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), 1-15.

believed that they had something that Native peoples needed, they presumed that Native religion, for whatever reason, was not good enough. And because Native religion was inherently tied to the culture and land of the specific tribe, it was hard to encourage changing religion without changing culture.

While AG missionaries inevitably imposed change on Native culture, unlike their predecessors, they framed this change solely in the language of conversion: if an Indian experienced salvation, he would also be expected to give up drinking and gambling (if he had a drinking or gambling problem), to care for his wife and children and not beat them or cheat on his wife, to have a good job to pay his tithes, and to become involved with his church family. Such expectations were not unique to missions to Indians, but were expected of any Pentecostal convert in any part of the world. This transformation led to what historian Elizabeth Brusco, referring mainly to Latin America, calls “the reformation of machismo.”⁶⁵ Such a reformation applied to all converts. Pentecostal missionaries, while trying to reform certain aspects of Indian life, avoided any comments that Native peoples were not “American” enough. They did not get involved with Indian policy, other than to criticize the government, often on humanitarian grounds.⁶⁶ AG missionaries did not air any opinions about the reservation system or issues of Native

⁶⁵ For more on Latin American Pentecostal/charismatic groups, see Elizabeth Brusco, The Reformation of Machismo: Conversion and Gender in Colombia (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

⁶⁶ For an example of this critique, see Author Unknown, “American Indians Neglected,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 17 March 1954, 16.

governance. Pentecostal distrust of authority, as well as greater evangelical distrust of the government, undergirded this approach.⁶⁷

Pentecostal missionaries, however, did adopt some of the methods used by previous Protestant missionaries. They emphasized the importance of Native clergy and Native evangelists and harkened back to Anderson's ideals to develop a Native church. From this inspiration, they developed the indigenous principle. They also supported education—but, notably, only for adults. Unlike previous missionaries, they did not target children. Some early Pentecostals even criticized the federal boarding school system as inhumane and problematic.⁶⁸ Like many Protestant predecessors, they loathed Catholics and viewed any Catholic missionaries that they encountered as “of the Devil.”

Finally, they shared with their Protestant colleagues an enduring view of Indians as “wretched but redeemable.” The scholar C.L. Hingham explored this paradox extensively in his work, showing how nineteenth century missionaries needed to view and portray Indians as both wretched and redeemable in order to establish missions and to justify their work to mission boards and donors, even after many denominations gained few converts.⁶⁹ White Pentecostals carried this idea over into the twentieth century by constantly emphasizing how Indians lived with illness, poverty, and “darkness.” Pentecostals often blamed other missionary groups for leading Natives astray with the “wrong” version of Christianity (usually Catholicism). Yet they also emphasized the faith

⁶⁷ For more on how Pentecostals viewed themselves in relation to American society, see Wacker, 217-239.

⁶⁸ For an example of such critique, see D.L. Brown, “Need of Evangelizing Those at our Door,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 13 June 1931, 7-8.

⁶⁹ See Higham, esp. the introduction.

of the converted by noting how willingly Native peoples embraced the power of the Holy Spirit, and they stressed in the *PE* how Indians were searching for someone to bring them the Gospel.

Restorationism made Pentecostalism appealing to converts. Because Pentecostals believed that their movement retrieved the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, the form of Christianity that they brought to Native people brimmed with a sense of power and the miraculous. Pentecostalism also promoted divine healing and prophecy. The power of the Holy Spirit could be displayed not only by speaking in tongues, but also by other physical manifestations such as dancing and being “slain” in the Spirit. Native Pentecostals could experience a form of Christianity that included both physical and spiritual elements.⁷⁰

Traditional Native religions varied by tribe, but most shared traits. All traditional religion focused on healing and most featured an intricate spirit world, with which Native peoples communed in a variety of ways—through visions, ecstatic dance, music, and prophecy. In addition, the majority of Native peoples employed their religious beliefs to help the crops grow and/or to ensure the success of the hunt.⁷¹ Pentecostalism, because of its restorationist qualities, offered a Christian version of all these components except the

⁷⁰ There were other Christian missionaries among American Indians influenced by the restorationist/primitive church impulse, such as Holiness Methodists. Some of these groups practiced divine healing, but none of them believed in tongues as evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit, and that is the key difference. Tongues, as evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit was a powerful way to discern God’s power in one’s own life, and it is what made Pentecostalism unique from other groups that shared some similarities with it.

⁷¹ Catherine L. Albanese, Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 16-46.

land/hunt.⁷² Because Pentecostal practice accommodated healing, visions, communion with the spirit world (in the guise of the Holy Spirit), ecstatic dancing, speaking in tongues, and prophecy, it did not seem like such a foreign experience. In fact, many Native converts pointed to these qualities of Pentecostalism in their testimonials or conversion narratives. As Mohawk evangelist Rodger Cree explained to me in his oral interview, his Pentecostal experience was always “supernatural.”⁷³

Beginning in the 1920s to the 1940s white Pentecostal missionaries trickled onto Indian reservations. They started arriving in much larger numbers by the 1950s and 1960s. They encountered Native peoples who had endured hundreds of years of missionary work and policy changes that had profoundly affected their lives. White Pentecostal missionaries repeated some of the mistakes of the past, chiefly ethnocentrism and paternalism. Yet they also offered a new restorationist version of the Gospel, which, if harnessed correctly, imbued spiritual power to all believers regardless of race. In implementing the indigenous principle, the majority of white Pentecostals only went halfway. It would take the work of their Native brothers and sisters to fulfill the ideal.

⁷² William McLoughlin famously wrote: “The three great stumbling blocks in accepting Christianity were its failure to address the basic issues of corporate harmony, bountiful harvests and sacred healing.” Pentecostal missionaries often argued that they at least offered sacred healing, as well as form of corporate harmony *if* everyone converted to Pentecostalism, developed a Native church and Native leadership and actually lived as if they were truly sanctified. Since Pentecostalism was not a land-based religion, the issue of crops never crossed the minds of evangelists. For more on McLoughlin’s essay on reactions to Christian missionaries, see William G. McLoughlin, The Cherokees and Christianity, 1794-1870: Essays on Acculturation and Cultural Persistence (Athens, GA.: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 9-33.

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3.3 Church Building

Armed with the belief that they were doing God's work, white AG missionaries arrived on Indian reservations with little sense of what lay ahead. The first obstacle they faced was church building, in both the literal and figurative sense. Missionaries had to find places where they could hold services then determine how to tailor the Gospel to their audience. Because extra buildings proved scarce on the reservations, missionaries found themselves improvising, often preaching in private homes, under tents or brush arbors, and sometimes in the open air. The struggle to construct church buildings proved difficult because they received no salary. They survived only on donations from the faithful. High rates of unemployment on the reservation only compounded the problem. Even after they won converts, white missionaries could not expect that their converts would have much to donate financially, although they could (and often did) donate time, talent and labor toward the construction of a building. Missionaries pragmatically had to include their Native parishioners in the actual physical building of churches, because they knew that outside construction contractors did not exist on the reservation. The churches often looked like other structures on the reservation—modest rather than imposing. When the people could not afford to finance the church, white missionaries turned to public appeals to other Pentecostals, often through newsletters to their supporters and articles in the *PE*. How white Pentecostals built churches among Native peoples shows how they attempted to live out the ideals of the faith mission.

AG missionaries, like many other Protestant evangelists who embraced faith missions, were practical people who did not let anything get in the way of their

determination to spread the Gospel. From the Papago reservation in Arizona, Sister Naomi Johnson reported that:

...about six weeks ago we were granted a plot of land by the Papago Indian Tribal Council as a site for our church. We have been using a brush arbor in the summer and a tiny tent in cool weather, but our tent is too small to accommodate even thirty-five people so we are hoping to get our building up very soon. The Assembly at Healdsburg, California, and the First Church in Amarillo Texas, have given enough so that we can start at once on the foundation. We trust that the Lord will send in sufficient for the rest as the need arises.⁷⁴

Missionaries commonly worked on a new church without sufficient funds to complete it, as in Sister Johnson's case. "Trusting in the Lord" often meant that missionaries hoped fellow believers would send a check or building materials, once word of their need got out. In the example of the mission to the Oneida Indians, Sister Mildred Kimbell reported in the *PE* that in April of 1959 her new church had opened even though it remained unfinished. She stated, "At present we are hoping to get a well dug which will cost about \$500. Pray that God will help us. The building cannot be completed until we get water."⁷⁵ Sister Kimbell was fortunate if her only major need was a well. Often, for lack of funds, missionaries built only the skeletons of churches, leaving them without proper windows or insulation.⁷⁶

Occasionally financial relief came from unexpected external sources. In the case of Brother Charles McClure on the Cattaraugus reservation in New York, local AG

⁷⁴ Author Unknown, "Among the Papagos," The Pentecostal Evangel, 18 October 1953, 15.

⁷⁵ Mildred Kimball, "The Oneidas Build a New Church," The Pentecostal Evangel, 8 January 1961, 18.

⁷⁶ Author Unknown, "They Must Wait," The Pentecostal Evangel, 26 February 1961, 10.

churches helped finance the modernization of his church, including a proper plumbing system that allowed for running water and restrooms. The local gas company, however, donated one of the most fundamental needs for a mission in upstate New York: free gas for the heating system.⁷⁷ Missionaries discovered that utilities, which most Americans considered necessities, were hard to come by on the reservation, where there was little infrastructure to support running water, heat, electricity, or the drilling of much-needed wells. Raising enough money to put in the basics was difficult enough for the missionaries; they also had to acquire extra funds to pay for the “luxuries” such as pianos, hymnals, proper pews, extra Bibles and sheet music for the choirs.⁷⁸ With money so tight, missionaries wasted very little, even when it seemed to outsiders that what they had was unusable. Sister Emogean Johnson reported that for a long time she used a revival tent as a church while ministering to the Navajos and Hopis in Arizona. After much wear and tear, according to Sister Johnson, “We spent much time mending rips in the old tent. It was a common sight to see my husband’s head sticking out through the top of the tent as he mended.”⁷⁹ Eventually the tent became unusable and the Johnsons sold it to a Christian Navajo for the price of one sheep. The tent was reborn as a shelter for the local Navajo spring lambs in order to protect them from the cold and predators.⁸⁰ On the reservation, nothing went to waste—not if the missionaries or their converts could put it to good use.

⁷⁷ Charles McClure, “The Challenge of the Cattaraugus,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 26 April 1959, 8.

⁷⁸ Author Unknown, “Thanks from the Reservations,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 18 March 1950, 18.

⁷⁹ Emogean Johnson, “Tale of a Tent,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 27 August 1961, 14.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Although donations from non-Native Pentecostal believers built many churches, in some cases Indians were able to fund their own churches. In 1950, Hoopa converts paid off the \$800 needed for improvements to their church.⁸¹ Because the tribe operated successful sawmills, its members were prosperous before the tribe was terminated in 1954. Few tribes, however, were as economically prosperous as the Hoopa, so others built their churches by sheer will and hard work. On the Gila River Reservation in Arizona, the local Pima converts built a tiny church with their own hands. *PE* reporter Edna Grieppe described the process:

Water was hauled in and mulch was made out of the desert soil. The ladies mixed the mud and packed it between the boards to make the “sandwich church,” while the men did much of the building. Not a skilled carpenter was around to make even as much as a window frame.⁸²

The Pima converts took pride in their work and proved grateful to have a church building even though the mud church was “crude,” according to the local white missionaries and the *PE* reporter.⁸³

Occasionally missionaries reported that a miracle enabled them to build a church or fund a new revival tent. On the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota, for example, white missionaries reported that they needed a new tent, but funds were limited. The missionaries came across a local rancher who

⁸¹ Author Unknown, “News From Indian Reservations: Report from Hoopa,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 12 November 1950, 12.

⁸² Edna Grieppe, “The Thirsty River People,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 23 June 1957, 16-17.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

...told of his covenant with God about a tent. His pasture land was drying up due to lack of rain. He had asked God to send rain before Sunday, promising that if the needed rain came he would purchase a new tent for Indian missions. Torrential rains came, bringing new life to the parched pasture land. "Now," he said "I'm ready to buy that tent."⁸⁴

The rancher received his rain, and the local missionaries secured a new tent, seemingly through the miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit. Such miracles helped solidify the missionaries' faith.

For missionaries on the Southwestern reservations, access to water was almost a bigger problem than not having a church. White missionaries reported to the *PE* that their converts needed water so that they could make long trips from the distant parts of the reservation to the mission. Without wells at the AG missions, converts would not go to church because they feared that their horses (which were how many people on the reservation still traveled in the 1950s and 1960s) would perish from thirst or their cars would overheat in the desert. Wells proved expensive and required heavy equipment. The AG Arizona district superintendent, J. K. Gressett, improvised a solution after it cost \$1000 to drill a well at a local mission station. "Brother Terry Smith and I bought a complete well-drilling rig on a truck for less than half the cost of that one well. We operate the drill ourselves, donating our work and hoping that the actual cost can be met

⁸⁴ Herbert Bruhn, "Indian Missions in South Dakota," The Pentecostal Evangel, 24 July 1955, 11.

by help to the missionaries.”⁸⁵ Knowing that a successful mission in the desert could not operate without water, Brother Gresset just bought his own drill. Ingenuity triumphed.

Once missionaries built churches on the reservations, they faced one last hurdle: the problem of success. Successful missionaries often discovered that they were “crowded out” of the small, plain churches that they had constructed with limited funds. In order to allow their mission work to grow, they had to expand—and expansion, like initial church construction, cost money. In the case of Sister Helen Burgess, a white missionary to the Navajos in Arizona, her popular Sunday school had outgrown its building. In the pages of the *PE*, she pleaded with readers for \$2,500 to renovate her church and buy a small bus for transporting converts from distant parts of the reservation.⁸⁶ Similarly, on the Shoshone and Paiute reservations, which Brother Roy Nelson and his wife served, the growing congregation became too large for the small hall that they rented. Brother Nelson appealed for \$1,200 so that they could complete the construction of a much larger building.⁸⁷ According to the pages of the *PE*, the problem of church growth became more pressing in the late 1960s and early 1970s. By then, most of the major missions to American Indians had been operating for at least a decade.

3.4 The Gospel

A second major issue that faced white missionaries was how to spread the Gospel among both receptive and unreceptive Indians. As with physical church building,

⁸⁵ J.K. Gressett, “Our Indian Work is Forging Ahead,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 6 May 1957, 12-13.

⁸⁶ Helen Burgess, “Navajo Church is Crowded Out,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 25 September 1960, 7.

⁸⁷ Author Unknown, “Indian Congregations Outgrow Present Buildings,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 20 November 1960, 18.

missionaries had to be innovative in order to reach potential converts and overcome the obstacles of race, class, language, and culture. White missionaries on the reservation were well aware that the tribes would not totally welcome them, so they targeted segments of the population that might be receptive to the Gospel. In that case, they adopted tactics similar to the white missionaries of the nineteenth century—convert those who were influential in the hope that they would sway others. This tactic took many forms.

Missionaries focused on both the youngest and oldest members of the local Indian population assuming that they would be more amenable to embracing Christianity and that they would also influence their family members. While ministering in the Phoenix area, Sister Washburn evangelized a young Pima girl named Julianne Sampson. Julianne had several large older brothers who openly disliked “preachers.” Sister Washburn feared the young “Pima giants” but continued ministering to little Julianne. One evening, the Sampson brothers showed up at Sister Washburn’s church for a meal and stayed for the evening service. According to Sister Washburn, a miracle occurred.

Before long the Sampson brothers were brought to their knees at our altar under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. They wept tears of repentance, their massive bodies quivering as they sobbed out their confessions of sin before the Lord. What an impact their salvation made on our congregation and on the people of their Salt River Reservation. Notorious for their drinking and fighting they had now become as gentle as babes.⁸⁸

The Sampson brothers became a major asset to Sister Washburn’s ministry and to the AG network of indigenous home missionaries. Talented musicians, they lent their skills to

⁸⁸ Washburn, 42.

local evangelists and traveled around the country to Indian revivals. All of the brothers married Pentecostal women and attended Bible school. One brother, Virgil, graduated with a Bible school degree and became a successful Native evangelist until he died in a car accident.⁸⁹ Sister Washburn's strategy had succeeded.

As Sister Washburn discovered, Native converts made good missionaries, evangelists, and church workers. The missionary couple Brother Gene and Sister Betty Steele also experienced this insight when they evangelized Rose, a young blind Navajo. Rose seemed unlike most Navajo converts. Because of her blindness, she was well educated, since she had attended a government school for the blind where she learned Braille and secretarial skills. Once Rose converted, she enrolled in Bible school in order to develop her skills for evangelism. The Steeles remarked, "Since she is efficient in reading and writing Braille, playing the piano and organ, and singing and witnessing for the Lord, we look forward to her completing Bible school and having a fuller ministry among her own people."⁹⁰ They realized that someone like Rose aided their ministry.

Sometimes missionaries focused on those who were influential within the tribe. Medicine men represented one such group. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the *PE* joyfully reported conversions of medicine men or traditional tribal elders as proof of the power of the Holy Spirit over heathenism. One story in the *PE* celebrated the conversion of an eighty-one- year-old Apache medicine man named David Ethelbah. The local missionaries acknowledged that Brother Ethelbah was a leader in the Apache community

⁸⁹ Ibid., 42-43.

⁹⁰ Gene and Betty Steele, "Bearing Precious Seed to the Navajo Capital," The Pentecostal Evangel, 17 March 1968, 25.

and encouraged him in his evangelization work on the White River Reservation. A *PE* reporter commented, “The people of the community continued to respect Brother David as their leader since he was a former medicine man. His influence for God makes him a blessing to the Cedar Creek Indian Church.”⁹¹ Missionaries understood that it was easier for Indians to hear about Jesus and Christianity if it came from one of their own—especially if that convert held prestige and influence within the community.

Besides focusing on certain members of the tribe, white missionaries reached other specific segments of the population. Imprisoned Indians constituted one such group. Brother Oliver Treece, a missionary stationed on the San Carlos Indian Reservation, spent time at the local jail, which housed Apaches who had committed a variety of crimes. The jail held both men and women, as well as the young children of incarcerated mothers. According to Brother Treece, “As our helpers begin to sing and testify about the love of Jesus, some prisoners crowd about the doors and windows; others stay back in their corners... At the close of the service gospel papers and tracts are given to all and special prayer goes up to our Father in heaven.”⁹² Brother Treece was not overly optimistic in his reports. He acknowledged that a majority of the prisoners did not stay on the right side of the law, saying, “Many of the prisoners promise to come to church as soon as they are released (and thank God, some do) but many forget their promises and the next time we see them they are in jail again.”⁹³ He remained hopeful, however, because in his opinion, “God does not forget them. His ear is ever open to their cry, and

⁹¹ Author Unknown, “Medicine Men Fine Christ,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 26 March 1967, 16.

⁹² Author Unknown, “Jail Work Among the Apaches,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 28 October 1956, 15.

⁹³ Ester B. Treece, “Ye Shall Be Witnesses,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 19 May 1963, 21.

His Word will not be fruitless.”⁹⁴ For Brother Treece, the hard work among the jailed Apaches was worth it if he managed to “sow” just one seed that would lead someone to turn his life around.

White missionaries also evangelized Indians employed in the rodeo and cattle industries. During her first missionary assignment, Sister Washburn heard about missionaries who pioneered cattle roundup evangelization among the cattle-ranching Western Apaches. Led by Sister Jean, these evangelists attended the yearly cattle roundup on the reservation, watched the day’s events, and shared a meal with the Apache cowboys. At the end of the meal, Sister Jean and her helpers launched into singing and playing music in order to draw an Apache crowd. Then the evangelization began. According to a letter sent to Sister Washburn, “By this time, the cowboys had removed their dusty, trail-worn hats. We detected an atmosphere of reverence for God’s holy presence. We knew conviction of the Holy Spirit rested heavily upon the hearts of those Apache cowboys and others gathered in that (sic) tribal stockyards.”⁹⁵ Sister Jean reported that many souls found salvation that day and even more hearts were touched. Other missionaries continued Sister Jean’s work at local roundups and rodeos into the 1960s, when it became a formalized AG endeavor. For example, in 1965 Brother Swank reported that he and a large group of local missionaries attended the All-Indian Rodeo in Sells, Arizona, in hope of evangelization. The group set up a booth and distributed copies of the *PE* along with many different tracts and pamphlets. They also played recorded

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Washburn, 24.

readings of the Scriptures that they had taped in a variety of Indian languages. The missionaries noted, “This was quite an attraction, for we noticed many of the older people, especially, listening to these. One old man in particular listened for two hours.”⁹⁶ Music and singing rounded out the program at the AG booth. Rodeos could be a fruitful field in the search for converts.

3.5 Healings

Healings were essential to Pentecostal evangelization because they functioned as dramatic and tangible evidence of God’s imminence. For Natives, healing helped fill the void that surrendering their old beliefs had left. White missionaries put much emphasis on dramatic and miraculous healings—more, in fact, than their Native counterparts. They felt that they had to prove the miraculous power of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in order to convert Indians to the “Jesus Way.” This emphasis on dramatic healings also paralleled the American Pentecostal healing revivals of the 1940s and 1950s.⁹⁷ Spurred by reports of miraculous healings and revivals among the non-Indian population, white missionaries fanned out across the reservations and reported their own miracles. One must keep in mind, that the *PE*, in which the majority of healings were reported, followed a stylized sequence for healing narratives that always ended in success. Still, it is useful to examine the reports of healings because they reveal the interpretive frame of Pentecostal believers.

⁹⁶ John D. Swank, “Witnessing at an All-Indian Rodeo,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 31 January 1965, 27.

⁹⁷ For more on the great revival in mainstream Pentecostalism, see David Harrell, *All Things Are Possible: The Healing and Charismatic Revivals in Modern America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975).

Publicized miracles and resurrections point to the strong primitivistic impulses within American Pentecostalism. They believed that the era of miracles had not ended with the apostolic age, but that true believers could perform miracles as vessels of the Holy Spirit. The beginning of Sister Washburn's mission work coincided with "great revival" within American Pentecostalism. According to historian David Harrell, "the great revival that launched the careers of the independent ministers lasted roughly from 1947 to 1958 and was predominantly a healing revival."⁹⁸ In Harrell's memorable words, "the common heartbeat of every service was the miracle—the hypnotic moment when the Spirit moved to heal the sick and raise the dead."⁹⁹ In the greater American Pentecostal culture, believers flocked to these revivals and witnessed miraculous healings. AG missionaries read of these events and prayed that the Holy Spirit would send great acts of healing to the reservations.

White missionaries often wrote of miraculous transformations that led skeptics into the Pentecostal fold. Early in her initial missionary posting on the Apache reservation in White River, Sister Washburn experienced her first "great miracle" as a Pentecostal missionary. In the middle of a sermon on God's miraculous nature, an Apache woman ran in carrying a baby.

She literally threw the baby into my arms. The baby's little body was cold and stiff in death. She had just taken it from the hospital morgue and was on her way to the cemetery for its burial. Reckless faith, however, directed her to the church. She wanted us to pray her baby would live again!

⁹⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 6.

There I stood holding that little corpse. This had to be possibly the greatest challenge of my ministry... As I prayed, I began to feel warmth return to that little body and the rigid little limbs became limp and moveable, I handed that baby restored to life into its mother's arms. All of us in that Sunday service were overcome with the knowledge that we had actually beheld the resurrection power of the Lord.¹⁰⁰

According to Sister Washburn, her congregants were awed, and she was unable to finish her sermon. After word spread among the Apaches, her ministry began to grow. Eighteen years later a young man and his mother visited Sister Washburn's parsonage in Phoenix, where she was serving the All-Tribes Church. He asked for her blessing before his departure for Vietnam. The young man identified himself as the Apache baby whom she had healed, and Sister Washburn prayed over him that he might come back from Vietnam alive. A few years later, she heard that he had returned safely to the reservation without any battle injuries.¹⁰¹ Sister Washburn's autobiography brims with reported miracles and the blessings of the Holy Spirit that she witnessed in her many years in the ministry. From her commentary on each incident, it appears that the miracles not only affirmed God's power but also reminded Sister Washburn of God's call in her own life. They affirmed the importance of her work.

Most of the reported miracles from this era were not as extreme as Sister Washburn's "resurrection" and usually involved accidents and physical infirmities. For example, in one such report, boiling water badly burned a Navajo infant. The *PE*

¹⁰⁰ Washburn, 21-22.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

reported, “The skin had slipped several places and water was running from her body where there was no skin. Little Marian was in great pain.”¹⁰² According to the doctors, the child would be in the hospital for four weeks for skin grafting, but instead of waiting for modern medicine to work, the missionaries implored their congregation to pray for the healing of the child. According to a report in the *PE*, within two weeks she experienced healing.¹⁰³ In another case, missionaries prayed over a young, crippled Apache woman. A week later, they returned to visit her and found that “Ardella had not had to use her crutches since the last time we prayed for her. She had been cutting wood and even had walked about one-half mile to a friend’s home.”¹⁰⁴ The missionaries concluded, “God definitely healed this young lady and she has been able to remain true to the Lord.”¹⁰⁵

According to the reports from the *PE*, many of those who were healed “stayed true to the church,” as might be expected since they had received tangible experience of God’s power.¹⁰⁶ In one case reported to the *PE*, a group of Christ’s Ambassadors, teenage evangelists from the All-Tribes Mission in Phoenix, visited with a young Indian couple that was expecting a child who doctors did not believe would survive. “The CA’s told them of God’s power to heal and prayed for the lady with her permission... at the

¹⁰² Author Unknown, “Healings Reported on American Indian Field,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 27 June 1965, 27.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Lemy and Hazel Pike, “Jicarilla Apaches Build a New Church,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 17 July 1960, 16.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ For another discussion on the use of Pentecostal healings as proof of God’s power, see Grant Wacker, “Marching to Zion: Religion in a Modern Utopian Community.” *Church History* 54 (December 1985): 506-526.

same time that the Christians were praying for the woman, a fine, healthy baby was born to her.”¹⁰⁷ The father of the child was reportedly amazed at the miracle and realized that it was “God who gave us our child.”¹⁰⁸

Healings proved crucial for successful missionary work, because the act of healing spoke of God’s power in a manner understood by both missionaries and those to whom they preached. Often, white missionaries did not speak the language of the people on the reservation, which led to heavy reliance on Indian interpreters. But miraculous healing stepped beyond the language barrier. Still, white missionaries and the white-run *PE* regarded healing differently from many of the Indian missionaries who came after them. For white missionaries, healing focused on actual bodily healing. Indian missionaries expanded the idea to include healing that encompassed righting not only physical and spiritual wrongs, but also mental and cultural ones.

3.6 Holy Ghost Powwows

During the middle decades of the twentieth century, the Pentecostal camp meeting or revival still served as a common means of evangelization. By the middle 1950s, white missionaries reworked the structure of the traditional camp meeting to meet the needs of their Indian converts. They gave birth to the most popular means of AG Native evangelization: the all-Indian camp meeting, which became a major contributor to the development of indigenous missionaries. Camp meetings, according to reports published

¹⁰⁷ Author Unknown, “Phoenix Indian CA’s Believe They are Saved to Serve,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 17 July 1960, 21.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

in the *PE*, offered places where Indian evangelists and missionaries first became widely known to the greater AG public. They were sites for fellowship and community among converts. It allowed them to affirm their Pentecostal identity and gave them an alternative to traditional Native American powwows and celebrations. In essence, the all-Indian camp meeting became a sort of “Holy Ghost powwow.” Yet the planning and execution of all-Indian camp meetings also exposed one aspect of the paternalism of white AG missionaries.

White missionaries were suspicious of traditional Indian powwows or celebrations because they felt that those gatherings, always an important part of Indian life, led to sin. In order to give their Indian converts an alternative to the powwow, missionaries planned camp meetings to take place at the same time, typically in the summer. In 1957, when the all-Indian camp meeting movement was just beginning to take form, white missionaries to the Apaches decided they needed to counter the influence of the powwow.

The Apache Indian Camp, in Mescalero, New Mexico, was held at the same time as the Indian Celebration. The Celebration is an annual affair among the Indians and is a time of idol worship, dancing, and sin. It was inspiring to see the Christians separate themselves from this and attend the services of the camp where they enjoyed God’s blessing upon their lives.¹⁰⁹

Instead of going to the celebration, Pentecostal Indians gathered at the Apache Indian camp, which allowed them to be with Pentecostal Indians in a setting that was

¹⁰⁹ Victor Trimmer, “Summer Indian Camps,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 10 June 1957, 14.

similar to, but also different from, a traditional powwow. AG home missionaries organized all-Indian camps by tribe or region. By the late 1960s, because of lobbying and influence by Native AG missionaries and evangelists, white AG missionaries allowed Indians at these gatherings to embrace aspects of Indian culture they deemed non-threatening to the Pentecostal message. Thus, the actual camp meeting took different forms depending on the region and tribal influence. Some missionaries held meetings under the traditional tent, but often Indians themselves improvised a structure. In the Southwest, where the largest camp meetings took place among the Navajo and Apache, Indian converts would build a brush arbor. Often, the meeting grounds included whole herds of sheep, goats, and cattle, along with the family dogs. Indian children were encouraged to amuse themselves by playing with the dogs, participating in sports, and racing their ponies.¹¹⁰ *PE* reporters and outside observers who visited the camps noted that all the animals, pony races, and camping Indians created a joyful, if madcap, scene.

The camp presented a picturesque scene a visitor such as I would not soon forget. Family life went on between services. There were tepees, covered wagons, pickups, trucks, tents under clumps of juniper trees and brush shelters. Over open fires the people were cooking their Navaho fry bread or Hopi hot bread, frijoles and tortillas. Children were being scrubbed outdoors. Small washings flapped on pinon trees. One woman was ironing with an old flat iron...¹¹¹

Conditions at the camp were rustic; there was no electricity, and clean water usually had to be hauled to the site. Indians came by whatever means they could, often in groups in

¹¹⁰ Jane Parker, "I Visited an Indian Camp," The Pentecostal Evangel, 31 October 1965, 24.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

the beds of pickup trucks, by covered wagon, or even by walking. They arrived from far-flung portions of the reservations, where they might be the only Pentecostals for miles, in order to meet fellow Indian converts. At the meeting, they sometimes found themselves battling the elements. In the Southwest, it was the heat of the desert summer, which typically stayed in the triple digits. Bugs, scorpions, and venomous snakes added drama.¹¹² At one camp among the Lower Brule Sioux in South Dakota, a tornado destroyed the meeting tent and picked up the missionary's wife, carrying her twenty-five feet in the air.¹¹³ Saving souls was daunting; the elements made it harder.

While the Indian camp meetings did take place under difficult circumstances, the editors of the *PE* emphasized the hardships and poverty of the Indian converts. *PE* reporters used words such as “crude” or “primitive” to describe the structures in which the Indians lived during the meetings. Highlighting their poverty, the editors of the *PE* noted that even in the 1960s many Indians walked or came by horseback. Reporters described Indian food as exotic cuisine that “regular” Americans did not eat, although frijoles and tortillas were common fare in the Southwest. Such descriptions served two purposes. By focusing on the poverty, the editors of the *PE* highlighted the Indians' faith—that even though Indian converts had to overcome major hardships to attend camp, they came anyway, thus testifying to the power of the Holy Spirit. Second, by emphasizing the poverty of Indian converts and their “exoticism,” the white editors re-

¹¹² Ruth Lyon, “Camp Meeting, Indian Style,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 11 January 1964, 11.

¹¹³ Ruth Lyon, “Smoke-Signals Bear News of Blessing at All-Indian Camp Meetings,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 28 October 1962, page number not given. The missionary's wife was reported to be “shaken up” but unhurt in the incident. The *PE* considered it a small miracle that none of the campers was seriously injured or killed by the tornado.

affirmed that the Indian converts, while Pentecostals, were different from white Pentecostals.

The program at all-Indian camp meetings resembled traditional Pentecostal ones. The missionaries separated children and young adults from their families during the day, and they took part in their own Bible study classes and workshops in doctrine. They encouraged the children to play sports and sometimes even had special children's worship services. By the late 1960s, a handful of the camp meetings specifically targeted Indian youth and separated them from their families.¹¹⁴ The adults spent the day in Bible study, both in English and in the local Indian language, since many of the elders did not speak English. Throughout the day, the adults took breaks to cook food or tend their animals. They spent the evenings in worship services that usually emphasized singing in Native languages.¹¹⁵

Because of the emphasis on preaching in Native languages at Indian camp meetings, white missionaries, who usually only spoke English, found themselves heavily dependant upon Native evangelists and missionaries.¹¹⁶ Almost every camp meeting featured at least one prominent Native missionary who preached. But though white

¹¹⁴ Ruth Lyon, "Emphasis on Youth: In Home Missions Summer Camps," The Pentecostal Evangel, 19 May 1968, 26.

¹¹⁵ Ruth Lyon, "Camp Meeting Indian Style," The Pentecostal Evangel, 1 November 1964, 11.

¹¹⁶ The lack of language skills among white missionaries who served Indians is particularly striking in comparison with missionaries who served in foreign missions. Native languages were hard to learn. They were often not written down, and specific theological concepts and phrases had no translation. If missionaries moved among a variety of tribes, as many did it was not efficient to learn a Native language, since they were all different. For these reasons, many missionaries found it impractical to learn Native languages, although some learned enough to memorize hymns and a few phrases in the local language. Often, however, those who bothered to learn to sing in Native languages were Indian missionaries who were working among a tribe that was not their own, such as Mohawk missionary Rodger Cree who told me that he learned to sing in the Pima language, even though he could not speak or preach in it.

missionaries depended on the Native preachers, the latter rarely actually *ran* a camp meeting. The white district superintendents, in collaboration with the white home missionaries, planned them. This pattern stemmed both from logistical reasons and from the undercurrent of pervasive paternalism. To be sure, there were few Native evangelists or missionaries during the 1950s and 1960s, so these men traveled from one camp meeting to the next.¹¹⁷ Because of a demand for their services, they were unable to be involved in the planning. But white missionaries' paternalism also played a role. While white missionaries were often eager to work with Indian missionaries and evangelists, they were not typically willing to hand over their power in the actual planning and execution.¹¹⁸

All-Indian camp meetings offer a lens to view the AG work with Indian converts. They clearly show the main trends of the AG's work among Indians: the willingness to innovate in order to save souls, but also the entrenched ethnocentrism and paternalism that plagued AG missionary work. White AG missionaries were willing to accommodate Native lifestyles, to the point that they permitted their converts to bring goats and sheep to camp meetings (likely for food purposes), made allowances for children to race ponies (as long as no gambling was involved), and arranged for the elders to hear the gospel in

¹¹⁷ According to a *PE* article published in 1961, there were "20 or more American Indian missionaries" out of a total of 170 home missionaries that worked with American Indians. No other hard statistics exist from the 1950-1960 period. See Ruth Lyon, "Evangelizing the American Indian," *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 24 September 1961, 18.

¹¹⁸ Because the *PE* was not forthcoming about who actually planned the camp meetings, I spoke with AG mission historian Gary McGee, who told me that standard practice was to have white district officials plan the camp meetings in conjunction with the white missionaries. John Maracle, the national Native American Representative, confirmed this and said that he believed that it was an on-going problem that the majority of camp meetings were controlled by district officials.

their own language. White missionaries consciously modeled the camp meeting after the traditional Indian powwow, for it was both a religious and social gathering.

Yet camp meetings were a source of conflict for Indian converts because they created a confrontation with traditional culture. By scheduling camp meetings at the same time as traditional tribal gatherings, the AG missionaries forced a choice. They implied that they did not trust their converts to be able to resist the “temptations” of a traditional environment. Powwows were not only religious gatherings, but social functions and business gatherings as well. By scheduling camp meetings to coincide with the powwows, white missionaries showed that they did not believe that their converts could eschew the religious elements and attend a powwow purely for economic and social reasons, such as buying or trading a horse, purchasing jewelry or rug-making supplies, or even visiting with neighbors or relatives. Finally, while Indian evangelists and missionaries were extremely important for a camp meeting’s success, they rarely held positions of power. All-Indian camp meetings began among the AG as an experiment and became so successful that they proved the most popular way to evangelize Native Americans. Yet they also showed the undercurrent of paternalism that would continue to plague the AG in its attempt to adhere to the indigenous principle.

3.7 The Devil and His Minions

White missionaries differed from Indian missionaries not only in their outlook on healing but also in their view of evil. White missionaries on the reservation saw themselves as battling three different incarnations of the Devil: Catholicism, traditional religion, and peyote religion. All Pentecostals, white and Indian, believed in the Devil. In

fact, they saw the Devil as constantly testing one's faith. In this section, an examination of white missionaries and their perception of the demonic further suggests mutual cultural incomprehension.

In the 1950s, white AG missionaries were the latest in a long series of white missionaries who had worked among the Indians. By this time, however, most other Protestant missionaries had left the Native American mission field for a variety of reasons.¹¹⁹ Sometimes the only non-Pentecostal missionaries still on the reservation were Catholic, usually priests who remained in areas that retained some adherents. However, the local AG missionaries regarded Catholicism as only slightly better than traditional religion or peyote. Pentecostals retained anti-Catholic feelings well into the twentieth century; they also saw Catholic missionaries as competition.¹²⁰ Some Catholic mission stations, particularly in the Southwest or in the Great Lakes area, had prospered among the local Native Americans for centuries and wielded strong influence. According to Brother George Bolt, a missionary to the Chippewa in Wisconsin, "The predominance of Catholicism made it very difficult to gain a foothold in the area."¹²¹ Ruth Lyon, AG missionary to the Chippewa and former *PE* editor, echoed this sentiment. She agreed that

¹¹⁹ A survey of the church directory of the *Farmington Times-Hustler* from the 1940s shows that at least six different denominations were engaged in missionary work among the Navajos in 1940s. These included Christian Reformed, Methodist, Episcopalian, Catholic, Pentecostal, and nondenominational groups. Author Unknown, "Church Directory," *The Farmington Times-Hustler*, 23 May 1947, 6.

¹²⁰ For more on anti-Catholicism in America, see Jay P. Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 56-60.

¹²¹ George Bolt, "Signor Mission Ministers to the Chippewas," *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 31 May 1959, 10.

Catholicism was “a major problem” among the Indian tribes of the Great Lakes regions.¹²² In a dispatch to the *PE* in 1958, Sister Lyon showed her distaste:

There are other forms of heathenism on the reservation as well. For instance, in the little village of Guadalupi in Arizona at Easter time, the usual festivities, which are a mixture of Catholicism and paganism, took place. If you could have accompanied the missionaries and observed the activities you would have felt as they did: *Can a thing like this take place here in America?*¹²³

AG missionaries and most other Pentecostals viewed Catholicism as barely Christian.

Because Catholic missionaries had long allowed a certain amount of syncretism in their work among Native Americans, AG missionaries viewed Catholicism as “tainted” by traditionalist practices.¹²⁴

AG missionaries also believed that Catholic missionaries did not properly emphasize the Gospel. Pentecostals did not agree with the importance that Catholics placed on devotional objects like rosaries and holy water or on one’s relationship with the saints or the Virgin Mary. According to Pentecostal missionaries, those beliefs tainted the Gospel and turned it to heathenism. One *PE* reporter commented, “Once the Catholic Church goes in and indoctrinates the people, exchanging their feather fetish prayer sticks for rosary beads and their yellow powder for statues of Mary, they are far harder to win to the Lord than from their pagan ways.”¹²⁵ According to AG missionaries, the Catholics

¹²² Ruth Lyon, Oral Interview, Springfield Mo., 11 Aug 2006.

¹²³ Ruth Lyon, “The Mission Field at Our Front Door,” The Pentecostal Evangel 20 July 1958. 14.

¹²⁴ For background on early Catholic syncretism in Indian missions see Axtell.

¹²⁵ James Reiner, “Who Is This Man You Call Jesus?” The Pentecostal Evangel, 29 June 1961, 9.

confused the impressionable Indians with their rituals and beliefs, thus making it harder for AG missionaries to clarify the true meaning of the Gospel.

While most Pentecostals saw Catholicism as a significant impediment in the mission field, traditional religion loomed larger. The *PE* continually demonized it. Missionaries were horrified to discover the “Devil dances” that took place on the reservations. In one such case, Sister Kaufmann sent the *PE* a sensationalistic account of traditional dance:

To the Apache, many illnesses are demon possession, especially a stroke, or lightening (sic) striking an individual. That person is then bound with cords of yucca plant and placed beside a bonfire. Four cedar trees are put upright in the ground pointing toward north, east, south, and west. Tom-toms beat and chants fill the air. Then four black-hooded men emerge from the darkness. They wear long tails and twirl whips that sing eerily in the night. Making owl-like sounds they dance about the fire, disappear into the darkness to the west and emerge again from the north, doing this until every direction has been covered.¹²⁶

Sister Kaufmann closed her description of the Apache sing by noting that the sick person was “pronounced cured, and there ensues a wild drinking party with yells and screams that fill the canyon until dawn.”¹²⁷ Sister Kaufmann clearly viewed the sing as the work of demonic forces—to her it signified the “darkness” that she was battling on the reservation. However, Sister Kaufmann’s description of the Apache sing also shows her own ethnocentric outlook. She speaks of “darkness,” “eerily,” “black-hooded men,” and

¹²⁶ Betty Swinford, “From Devil Dances to Christ,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 28 April 1963, 12.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

she ends with references to heavy drinking. Her description clearly played on white Pentecostal fears about traditional religion, with its images of the “wild savage” dancing before the fire. All of the descriptions of traditional religion in the *PE* conform to the same fear-stirring type as the one given by Sister Kaufmann. The word “tom-toms” was almost always used, not “drums,” because “tom-toms” evoked the “savage.”¹²⁸ *PE* authors depicted sings or dances as always taking place in “darkness” and usually ending in alcoholic celebration. The missionaries never described the colorful and beautiful dances that marked certain stages of Indian life or the dances and ceremonies that took place during the daytime for the public. They never mentioned that at many dances and ceremonies, alcohol was banned.

Sister Kaufmann did not understand traditional religion—to her it was the work of the Devil, because that was her only frame of reference for processing what she was seeing. For Pentecostals, spiritual matters were black and white, religion was either of Jesus and the Holy Spirit or of the Devil. They allowed no shades of grey. In Native cultures, religion contained nuances and contradictions that defied black and white categorization. In one example, the Apache traditional religion included healing and the belief in good and evil. Both were important concepts. An Apache “witch” (or “*ingashn*”) could make a person ill, mentally or physically, and a sick person would undertake a “sing” to be healed. However, witchcraft was not the only reason for illness. People could bring illness upon themselves by behaving “without respect” and not

¹²⁸ One important exception to this rule: Alta Washburn always referred to the Indian drums as simply “drums.” Her observations on traditional dancing did not have the markers of ethnocentrism in comparison to her other white missionary colleagues.

following the multitude of taboos that Apaches accepted.¹²⁹ In the majority of Native traditional religions, the key was achieving balance. Sin was not a part of the traditional Native worldview, and Natives defined morality by the customs of each particular tribe. Those customs were often more liberal in matters regarding sex and marriage than those of the Christian missionaries. Thus, missionaries did more than confront the problem of belief—in trying to convince Indians to accept Christianity, they also confronted deep-seated aspects of Native culture.

Missionaries also had to contend with the growing use of peyote among North American Indians. White AG missionaries believed peyote, like traditional dances, to be of the Devil. Peyote is a small cactus. When consumed in its dried form, its detractors said it brought about hallucinations and visions. Members of the peyote religion countered that the cactus brought about clarity of mind when taken properly and with respect for its powers. The peyote ceremony was both communal and nocturnal. Some peyote users who incorporated Christianity into the use of peyote regarded peyote as a form of “communion” that could bring on an experience of God.¹³⁰ Missionaries reported to the *PE* about peyote in the same negative tones that they used for traditional religion.

According to one:

Peyote is a far greater menace than is often recognized.
Some Indians believe the use of peyote induces dreams that

¹²⁹ Keith Basso, “Western Apache,” in The Handbook of North American Indians, ed. Alfonso Ortiz (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1983), 10 (Southwest):478-479.

¹³⁰ Some peyote users reject Christianity and incorporate peyote within their traditional beliefs, while others embrace certain Christian principals and incorporate peyote in a syncretistic manner as a form of communion with God or Jesus. See Omar Call Stewart, Peyote Religion: A History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987).

will guide one's future steps and make him rich. Recently an Indian woman was given peyote instead of being taken to the hospital—and she died from it...One of our men here in the church lost his sister in death because she ate it. Peyote acts like acid and eats away until the user finally dies.¹³¹

Although most Catholic missionaries were just as likely to frown on peyote as Pentecostals, AG missionaries linked peyote to Catholic and Episcopal missionaries in order to support their anti-Catholic rhetoric. One missionary wrote: “It is unthinkable that any denomination claiming to be Christian could ever be sympathetic to the Native American Church, when the drug employed in the rituals of this church will eventually paralyze and possibly kill the users. Christ could never be glorified in such a practice. To its slaves *Father Peyote* is god.”¹³² Missionaries found peyote suspect because they viewed it as a drug. Those opposed to peyote saw it as no different from LSD or acid. As with traditional dancing, most missionaries never attempted to understand the theology and belief behind peyote, but instead let their own bias against this “drug” interfere with any attempt to understand the practice.¹³³

Most white Pentecostal missionaries did not recognize the likelihood that some of their converts moved between Pentecostal belief and traditional practices, including the use of peyote. Of course, the *PE* never provided any evidence of such “backsliding,” but anthropologists encountered Native people who retained dual religious identities. One example is that of an elderly Paiute woman who told the anthropologist Omar Call

¹³¹ Ruth Lyon, “Slaves of Peyote,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 25 March 1962, 17.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ For a more in-depth understanding of the rituals surrounding peyote and the Native American Church, see Stewart.

Stewart: “I’m a Christian lady. I go to the Assembly of God church all the time. I prayed to God, worshipped God, worshipped Jesus in the peyote meeting. The Christian church and the peyote meetings are the same.”¹³⁴ Such an admission would likely make an AG missionary cringe, but many Native people did not see traditional beliefs or peyote usage as incompatible with Christianity. Some Indians actually viewed Christianity and traditional beliefs as complementary.

In the minds of most white Pentecostal missionaries, Catholicism, traditional dancing, and peyote all represented the Devil. In addition, they stood as impediments in the competition for souls. AG missionaries felt that they had to fight these evils, because if they did not, the souls of the Indian people would be lost forever. However, their categorization of these practices as evil reveals the cultural misunderstanding that pervaded the world view of the white missionaries in the 1950s and 1960s. White missionaries had no way to come to terms with the Native religions that they encountered, so they framed its practice in terms of the demonic, which they did understand. By demonizing traditionalism and peyote, white missionaries displayed their own ethnocentric attitude toward Native culture—a problem never rectified despite the best efforts of their Native counterparts.

3.8 Conclusion

The problems of cultural misunderstandings and white paternalism in mission work are hard to assess fairly because everyone is a product of her or his own time and

¹³⁴ Ibid., 288.

place. The white AG missionaries who embraced their “burden” and left their familiar American homes for work on unfamiliar Indian reservations were not really that much different from the average working-class American. On the reservation, they encountered strange people, strange food, strange customs, and strange languages, and yet they were in their own country. The white missionaries carried with them the ethnocentric attitudes of white Protestant Americans, including a sizable dose of anti-Catholicism and stereotyped ideas of what “Hollywood Indians” would be like. They squarely faced multiple demons including their own poverty, ignorance, illnesses, and self-doubt. In the midst of this sea of misunderstanding, white missionaries constructed an incomplete model for evangelization that Native missionaries improved upon. They built churches, dug wells, raised money, saved souls, arranged camp meetings and revivals, facilitated the healing of believers, and did battle with what they understood to be the Devil. Their work was far from perfect, and at times deeply troubling, but they carried their “burden” with gusto, determination, and dignity.

Most white missionaries during these early decades were unaware of their own paternalistic and ethnocentric leanings and the ways they would ultimately create more problems for AG Indian work extending even into the next century. Some white missionaries, however, acknowledged their biases and rose above them. During Sister Washburn’s ministry at the All-Tribes Mission in Phoenix, she was troubled because there were not enough trained Indian evangelists. The comment of a young Indian evangelist, a student having adjustment problems at a regular AG Bible school, addressed the problem directly: “‘Sister Washburn’ he questioned, ‘Why can’t we Indians have our

own Bible school? We can preach in our language but we need a place where we can study the Word together; a place where we can have more in common than in a school where most of the students are Anglos.’”¹³⁵ Sister Washburn acknowledged that they needed such a place. She knew that white missionaries faced multiple hurdles in their ministry, hurdles that would not stand in the way for Indian missionaries. She knew that an indigenous church required indigenous pastors and missionaries. She also knew that her idea would be opposed by those who believed that the Indian converts did not need special treatment and could never take on full leadership roles in the AG. Sister Washburn knew that many difficulties had to be overcome before the founding of her Indian Bible college, yet she willingly faced the opposition of fellow white missionaries and AG personnel. She assumed her especially heavy “burden” for an all-Indian Bible school because, in her mind, the power of the Holy Spirit was behind her, and nothing would stop her from what God wanted to be her life’s work. In doing so, she not only founded the first all-Indian Bible college in the country, the All-Tribes Bible School, in September 1957, but she also laid the major cornerstone on which an AG indigenous church would eventually be constructed. Sister Washburn, through her strength and faith, moved beyond the paternalism and ethnocentrism of most white AG missionaries and showed the AG as a whole the steps necessary for an indigenous church.

¹³⁵ Washburn, 48.

4. Chapter 3: American Indian AG Missionaries and the Struggle to Define a Pentecostal Indian Identity

Late one evening in 1943, John McPherson, a young Cherokee soldier, went out drinking with his wife. As he stumbled from one bar to the next, he spied a Pentecostal preacher on the street corner exhorting sinners to come to Christ. Although McPherson grew up in a Salvation Army home and his wife was the daughter of a Pentecostal preacher, neither one had been “saved,” as Pentecostals called the conversion experience. McPherson recounted, “[W]e heard the melodic refrain of a song, and recognizing it to be religious in nature, stopped to listen for a moment. This time, I heard more than [sic] just a melody, I listened to the words of the preacher.”¹ Despite his wife’s dismay, McPherson knelt down on the street and prayed the sinner’s prayer. At that moment, a realization washed over him.

All my life I had labored under the stigma of being born an Indian. I had always been made to feel I wasn’t quite as good as people with white skin. I was amazed after laboring under that stigma all my life to find the One who so loved me that He died upon the cross for me. He wasn’t ashamed of me or my copper skin. He wasn’t ashamed of my humble beginnings or ancestry.²

From that moment on, John McPherson became Brother McPherson and, after the end of World War II, embarked on a long career as a traveling evangelist and AG missionary.

¹ John McPherson with Phil Taylor, *Chief: My Story* (Tulsa, Okla.: Carbondale Assembly of God, 1995), 48.

² Ibid.

As it did for many of his other Pentecostal Indian brothers and sisters, conversion and the baptism of the Holy Spirit changed Brother McPherson's life. He had grown up as an Indian in the white man's world because his mother had sold her allotment; they did not live on the reservation. Born and reared in Drumright, Oklahoma, during the Depression, Brother McPherson experienced not only racial prejudice but also grinding poverty. In his autobiography, he jokingly described his house as being so rickety that "if the termites had stopped holding hands it probably would have fallen on top of us."³ He went on to note, "our furniture, instead of 'Early American,' I think was 'Early Orange Crate.'"⁴ Despite poverty, he grew up in a happy home, well loved by his parents. Their love, however, could not shield him from the realities of American life. He recalled that he "was reminded daily that I was an Indian growing up in a white man's world. When I started to school, I can remember coming home in tears, crying because of the cruelty of the other children as they mocked and called me names because of my dark skin."⁵ Hatred inflicted deep wounds. But once Brother McPherson became a Pentecostal and an AG missionary, he found theological and spiritual ways to address his pain—and the pain of his Indian brothers and sisters.

This chapter explores the history of American Indian Pentecostals who became missionaries to their own people. As a few dedicated Indian leaders emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, they profoundly shaped the AG's home missions to American Indians. The ascendancy of Indian leaders took place at the same time as the growth in white AG

³ Ibid., 8.

⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁵ Ibid., 10.

missionaries to American Indians. While similarities marked the attitudes of the two groups, major differences are also apparent. For white missionaries, the struggle to reconcile their Pentecostal worldview with the one they encountered on the reservation posed the greatest difficulty. Indian missionaries, on the other hand, needed to define themselves as Indians and Pentecostals so that they could integrate their religious beliefs with their daily lives.

In their efforts to make the Gospel relevant to their fellow Indians, American Indian missionaries reworked it into a Gospel of healing that addressed the everyday difficulties of many Indians' lives: poverty, prejudice, alcohol, drugs, and early death. To reach more of their people, some Indian missionaries preached in their native languages, a major innovation. Other Indian leaders built all-Indian gospel choirs, pioneered radio shows, and made public appearances on the camp meeting circuit outfitted in Indian costumes. Like their white counterparts, Indian missionaries literally and figuratively built churches, but they did so in a manner that was more culturally sensitive to the needs of their people.

Pragmatic and armed with Holy Ghost power, Indian missionaries during the 1950s and 1960s quietly fought against the ethnocentrism and paternalism of their white missionary brothers and sisters, as well as those who inhabited the power structure of the AG. Many of their white colleagues supported their missionary work, yet in the struggle to erect an indigenous church within the AG, Indian missionaries enjoyed the help of only a few exceptional white missionaries such as Sister Alta Washburn. Their "burden" for their people and the dream of an indigenous church was heavy but not impossible.

They had, after all, *chosen* the “Jesus Way,” and in doing so, redefined their lives as Indian Christians. Although this chapter seeks to tell the stories of Indian missionaries, its main emphases fall on the formation of a Pentecostal Indian identity and the autonomy some American Indians say they found in Pentecostalism. Through conversion, their attempts at educating the white Pentecostals about Indian history, their redefinition of the Gospel, and their innovative work among their people, Indian missionaries found some autonomy within the AG missions system. They carved out a place for themselves that was distinctly Indian while remaining distinctly Pentecostal.

This chapter contains six sections: conversion, the Gospel, reactions toward traditional religion, church building, lay leadership, and the Indian missionary image. The conversion section explores why these particular Indian men found themselves drawn to Pentecostalism and how it empowered them. The section on the Gospel focuses on how Indian missionaries re-interpreted the Good News to fit their needs and how they approached healing differently from white missionaries. Pentecostal Indian attitudes toward traditional religion are addressed in the next section. The following two sections examine how Indian missionaries resisted paternalism and sought to meet the needs of the people through church building and cultivating lay Indian leadership. Finally, I discuss the image of Indian missionaries— how they chose (and did not choose) to portray themselves. The conclusion draws these six sections together to show how Indian missionaries redefined themselves as Christian Indians, found autonomy within the AG and, in doing so, challenged white Pentecostal expectations of the AG’s Home Missions program.

4.1 Conversion

Once an Indian converted and subsequently experienced the Holy Spirit, his or her life often changed sharply. Pentecostal Indians embraced a new identity, one that often put them at odds with their Indian background and dramatically altered their lifestyles and relationships with family members. Many also found a calling to be missionaries to their own people. This section presents four different conversion narratives in order to show the pre-conversion background of these prominent Indian missionaries, why they chose the “Jesus Way,” and how that choice led them to leadership and autonomy in the AG.

The conversion narratives in this section represent first-person testimonials taken from the pages of the *PE*, autobiographies, and recorded interviews. For all of these men, conversion served as the major turning point of their lives. This indicates the importance that Pentecostals placed upon conversion and the personal testimonial. All four of the men likely told their conversion narratives hundreds of times during their ministries, and these testimonials follow common patterns. The predictable nature of the typical conversion narrative presents certain problems. According to Grant Wacker; all conversion narratives take the form of a “relentlessly stylized, three-step sequence.”⁶ This sequence includes the initial problem, the event of conversion, and the benefits that occurred after conversion. Virtually all Pentecostal conversion narratives fit into this structure. Because believers recount them as a reflection of a spiritual journey, the

⁶ Grant Wacker, Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 58.

authors “cast their words in a dramatic before-and-after framework in which the Pentecostal experience marked a transition from darkness into light. We simply never find an admission that things might have been the same, let alone better, before the transition.”⁷ Another major problem for the historian is that testimonials in print are invariably “shorn of their real-life context.”⁸ While the testimonial offers the narrative of a life and emphasizes specific events that fit into this narrative, usually there is no way of knowing the full context in which conversion occurred. Only the memory of the convert—a suspect memory that has re-constructed the event to make it fit into the language of Pentecostalism—survives. Even with these problems, however, an examination of the testimonials of Pentecostal Indians is needed. The conversion narratives show how they constructed their own memories and, in doing so, their identities.

Charlie Lee grew up herding sheep in the shadow of the Shiprock on the Navajo reservation in the Four Corners region of northwestern New Mexico. From a young age, Lee was a spiritual seeker—he wanted to know the meaning of life, and, as a Navajo, he turned to his elders for answers. According to Lee, “My wise old grandfather tried to draw from the resources of his own years of experience to bring some measure of satisfaction to my inquisitive mind, but still the searching went on.”⁹ His grandfather and grandmother taught him about the Navajo gods and traditional beliefs, but it was not enough. At a government boarding school, Lee discovered that he was a talented artist.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 58.

⁹ Charlie Lee, “Charlie Lee’s Testimony,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 17 August 1952, 10.

His talent attracted notice and school officials sent him to the Santa Fe Indian School, a boarding school that specialized in the arts. His paintings, traditional renderings of Navajo life and animals, began selling remarkably well. By the time Lee graduated, he had exhibited his paintings at the Indian Ceremonial in Gallup, New Mexico, the State Art Museum in Santa Fe, the Philbrook Art Museum in Tulsa, Heard's Museum in Phoenix, and the DeYoung Art Memorial in San Francisco. He had also won two first prizes at the 1946 New Mexico State Fair, one for animal figures and one in the home life category.¹⁰ Dealers all over the Southwest bought his paintings, and the Smithsonian Institution purchased one as an example of modern Navajo art.¹¹ Fame and fortune had unexpectedly smiled on the young Lee.

Lee realized that he was extraordinarily fortunate because his artistic ability had given him a viable way to make a living. Yet he was still seeking answers and felt a call to serve his people. Boarding school had introduced him to mainline Protestant Christianity. To him this was simply the "white man's God," an impersonal and detached deity that could not give him the answers he needed. The summer after graduation from high school, he visited an Apache friend at the San Carlos Reservation in Arizona, where he encountered AG missionaries and Pentecostal-style worship. Lee reported, "For the first time in my life I saw a group of Indians worshipping God with enthusiasm and sincerity. They not only testified to the saving grace of God, salvation through the shed

¹⁰ Turning Point with David Manse, The Charlie Lee Story, 1976, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, 4.

¹¹ Ibid.

blood of Jesus Christ, but also emphasized the infilling of the Holy Spirit.”¹² Upon attending several services, Lee experienced a conversion that he explained as “a personal confrontation with a Being, not a religious process of being initiated into an organization. It was a confrontation with an individual personality—Jesus Christ.”¹³

When Lee converted, he moved beyond making a commitment to Jesus. “But to me this salvation which I heard about was more than a thing to help me. I began to reason this way: I want to help my people; lift them out of their ignorance and darkness. The best thing I can offer them is the story of Jesus because that is of eternal value.”¹⁴ Brother Lee believed that God had handed him a “burden” to shoulder—a “burden” for his own people. Shortly after his conversion, Brother Lee gave up his art, and in 1948 he enrolled at Central Bible Institute in Springfield, Missouri.¹⁵ Although he continued to paint as a hobby, his art now funded his ministry to the Navajos and helped fund the building of a church. At CBI he learned about the indigenous principle from Melvin Hodges and decided to apply it to a mission to his own Navajo people. In 1951, Brother Lee returned to his beloved homeland and began to preach the Gospel in Navajo—a radical move considered risky by other AG missionaries.¹⁶

¹² Lee, 10.

¹³ Turning Point, 8.

¹⁴ Lee, 10

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Turning Point, 10. The official reason that the AG considered it risky that Lee preached in Navajo was because there was some doubt as to whether certain theological concepts would translate correctly. Yet it is probable that white missionaries did not like Lee to preach in Navajo because they had no way of monitoring what he was preaching.

Excellence, tenacity, and ingenuity best defined Brother Charlie Lee and his missionary work among the Navajos. As an artist, his colleagues considered him one of the best of his generation. As a missionary, he lived out his life according to the indigenous principle. Brother Lee eventually built the first fully indigenous church in the AG even though no one in the AG expected him to succeed. Brother Lee was different from many of his Indian contemporaries because he came out of a stable traditional family and enjoyed a flourishing career before conversion. By white conventions, he was a “model Indian” for his time: an accomplished artist who could appeal to both white and Indian audiences while still retaining a traditional Navajo style in his paintings. This pattern also marked his missionary work. Brother Lee was one of the first Indian converts who fully and publicly embraced both the Indian *and* Pentecostal halves of his life. For Brother Lee, choosing the “Jesus Way” did not mean that he had to repudiate the “Navajo Way.”

Although Brother Lee had contact with traditional Navajo religion, he never fully embraced it as his contemporaries Jimmie Dann and Andrew Maracle had done. Dann was a member of the Shoshone tribe and a devoted Sun Dancer, while Maracle was a Mohawk who participated in the Log Cabin religion (also known as the Code of Handsome Lake). Although their backgrounds and beliefs were dissimilar, the same circumstances brought them to their Pentecostal conversions. Both Dann and Maracle failed to find answers within traditional religion, and both turned to alcohol. For Jimmie Dann, conversion formed his major turning point. For Andrew Maracle, the healing that followed conversion sealed his belief in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jimmie Dann grew up on the Shoshone reservation in Fort Hall, Idaho. Exposed to the Sun Dance as a youth, he sought spiritual power so that he might heal and lead his people from their poverty and troubles.¹⁷ Stationed in the Pacific theater during World War II, Dann worried about death. He asked himself, “If I am killed, will the Great Spirit take me to the Happy Hunting Ground?”¹⁸ Dann struggled to find answers to his questions. Throughout the war, he kept practicing the Sun Dance to protect himself. As he explained it: “On the islands where our unit was stationed I often slipped away alone and sang the songs of our tribal dances, begging the Great Spirit to keep me from harm.”¹⁹

Although Dann survived the war unscathed, he grew more disillusioned with the Sun Dance and, after returning home, turned to liquor. Prior to the war, Dann had felt called to be a medicine man or a tribal leader, but now, unsure of what he believed, he turned away from all religion.²⁰ In 1946, white AG missionaries appeared on the Fort Hall reservation. Angry that the “white man’s religion” had arrived, Dann did all he could to drive them out, physically threatening the missionaries and disturbing the worship services. Twice, Dann faced the authorities for his actions.²¹ Three years later, a now-married Dann was out one evening with his wife. For lack of anything else to do, she suggested that they visit the AG mission. He noted, “Hate for the missionary still burned

¹⁷ Jimmie Dann, “I Received No Peace from the Shoshoni Sun Dance,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 18 July 1954, 10.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

in my heart. But when we reached the church, a great desire for cleansing from sin came over me and in spite of myself I turned my car into the churchyard.”²² That evening, Dann converted to Pentecostalism and received Holy Spirit baptism. He wrote that God had placed a “burden” on him: “Now for the first time I could do something for my people. I could tell them of Jesus.”²³ Brother Dann later attended Southwestern Bible Institute and became a prominent traveling evangelist.²⁴

Born in 1914, Andrew Maracle faced a harsh life on the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario, Canada. His mother died in childbirth along with her baby. Because his father was a logger who traveled often, friends and family separated Maracle and his seven siblings and sent them to live with whoever could care for them.²⁵ In childhood, Maracle moved frequently among family friends and even strangers. At his first long-term foster home, Maracle became acquainted with the Longhouse religion and became an avid practitioner. The Longhouse religion gave his young life meaning. Maracle recounted:

Traditional dances were a form of worship and expression of thanksgiving for the seasons and their first fruits. To waste was wrong! Each individual was taught “he was a way or law unto himself.” We were told to “Listen very, very carefully.” I became infused with spiritual, cultural and political knowledge. I also clung tenaciously to my Mohawk language.²⁶

²² Ibid., 11.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Andrew Maracle, From a Log Cabin: An Autobiography of the Life and Ministry of Rev. Andrew Clifford Maracle, Record Group 17, Shelf Location 2/3/8, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, no page number given.

²⁶ Ibid.

For Maracle, Mohawk identity imposed an obligation to embrace and defend traditional religion as well as his language. He became an adamant “defender of the faith” whenever he encountered Christianity. He harassed the missionaries on the reservation until one day he wandered into an AG mission looking for a meal. By the end of the evening, he had converted and found himself “cleansed of sin.”²⁷

Conversion did not immediately change Brother Maracle’s life in the clear-cut way it changed Brother Lee or Brother Dann. He did not immediately become a missionary like his contemporaries. Instead, he continued working as a day laborer while testifying at church in the evening. The major turning point for Brother Maracle was a near-fatal accident in upstate New York. A large metal roller he was hauling with a horse team broke loose, spooked the horses, and landed on him.²⁸ When Brother Maracle woke, he found himself in a hospital, paralyzed from the neck down. The doctors told him he would never move again. Determined that God would help him, Brother Maracle lay in the hospital for six weeks praying. Then his cousin Lansing Maracle and his pastor came from Canada to visit. The pastor said:

“Brother Maracle, we are going to pray for you. Do you believe that God is going to heal you?” My answer came without any hesitation. “I don’t believe only God can but I believe He will heal me!” Pastor Freez reached out to place his hand on my head to pray, but before he made contact, another hand touched me and was gone! Praise “His” wonderful name. I was instantly healed by the power of God.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid., 7.

²⁸ Ibid., 4.

²⁹ Ibid., 7.

Brother Maracle's doctor came to check on him the next morning and pronounced him healed. The doctor stated that Brother Maracle's recovery was indeed a miracle. After his healing, Brother Maracle found a new purpose in life. He enrolled in the local Zion Bible College in upstate New York so that he could become an AG missionary.³⁰

While Brothers Lee, Dann, and Maracle hailed from traditionalist backgrounds, some AG Indian missionaries came from Christian homes. Rodger Cree grew up in a Pentecostal home, a farm on a small Mohawk reservation thirty miles from Montreal. In 1928, a traveling French Pentecostal preacher named Brother St. Arneault, a protégé of the Pentecostal evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson, had converted his mother.³¹ Shortly thereafter, Cree's father followed her example. Cree's mother told her son that his father immediately gave up hard living:

He was a weekend drinker—he got mean and my mother would want to leave and go back to her mother. That happened several times. When he became a Christian it was such an instantaneous change... his salvation was so powerful that he never drank again. He stopped using tobacco.³²

Cree grew up in a loving home, which he described as “peaceful.”

Like Brother McPherson, Cree encountered racism at an early age. He summed up the experience with a quip: “The French and Indian Wars never really ended.”³³ He recalled that French-Canadian children regularly tormented Indian children on their way to school. Angry after French children chased him into a deep snow bank and taunted

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Rodger Cree, Interview, Springfield, Mo., 8 August 2006.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

him, Cree decided that he and his brother would teach the French-Canadian children a lesson. As he told it:

So we decided that this couldn't continue, so my dad had a fish knife, its got a bent to it. Course we didn't tell our parents or anything. So we took that knife to school. Sure enough once we got near the school, they thought "here come these Indian kids we are going to have our fun, and drive them off the road." So instead of our running, we ran towards them. I grabbed my brother's hair, and I had that knife, I had that knife and showed I was going to scalp them. It was amazing... how quickly those kids disappeared into the doorway of that school. We were never bothered again.³⁴

Pentecostalism was still a young movement when Cree was a boy. His church was a small independent Pentecostal one that the local Methodist church vehemently opposed.³⁵

Although he grew up in the Pentecostal tradition, Cree was not born-again until he attended a New Years Eve service in Montreal at age 17. Eight days later, he received Holy Spirit baptism. He recalled, "I saw a ball of fire that was lodged in the ceiling—when that ball of fire touched my head, I began to speak in a different language, altogether. Supernatural."³⁶ A desire to go into the ministry seized Brother Cree, and he enrolled at a French-Canadian Bible college despite his hatred of the French. There, through the power of the Holy Spirit, he said that he learned to overcome his own racial prejudice. He recounted: "I remember going to school and walking and I heard someone say (in French) 'the savage has come.' The Holy Spirit kept me from turning around... I

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid. According to Cree, the Methodists waged a fierce battle with the local Pentecostal families because most of the Pentecostal converts came from the Methodist congregations.

³⁶ Ibid.

learned how to deal with those people.”³⁷ During his second year in Bible college, Brother Cree experienced a vision of an Indian woman crying out in sickness; he decided right then to become a missionary to his own people.³⁸ His first mission was among the Cree people of the Hudson Bay area of Canada, a posting that Brother Cree felt was providential, given his last name. He went on to become a traveling evangelist and missionary both in Canada and in the southwestern United States.³⁹

Like Brother Lee, Brother Cree never felt that Pentecostalism conflicted with his identity as a Mohawk Indian. He fiercely defended the view that Indian culture is defined by language and customs, not religion, saying, “When you are Native, you don’t have to do cartwheels, or play the drums, or put on regalia. You know who you are, your identity. You cannot dress it up.”⁴⁰ Brother Cree and Brother Lee embraced language as a key marker of their Native culture and sought to proclaim the Gospel in Native languages, enabling themselves and others to construct identities that were both Indian and Pentecostal.⁴¹

Brothers Lee, Dann, Maracle, and Cree all came to Pentecostalism from different tribal affiliations, different childhood backgrounds, and different religious experiences. They all converted as young men and each felt the call to missionary work among their

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ This emphasis on language as a marker of culture remains for American Indian Pentecostals and evangelicals. Smith talks about this, pointing out that many twenty-first century Native evangelicals and Pentecostals fiercely retain their Native languages. Modern Native evangelicals and Pentecostals also feel that it is important to receive the Gospel in their Native languages, mirroring the ideas of Brothers Lee and Cree. Andrea Smith, Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 97.

own people. While each conversion was distinct, some striking similarities also marked them. All of these men had hoped to help their people, but before their conversions they did not know how. Pentecostalism gave them hope and the ability to reach out to their fellow Indians as missionaries. Brothers Dann and Maracle both struggled with alcoholism and anger toward their lives as Indians; Pentecostalism gave them a way to resolve that anger. Brother Cree dealt with hatred toward the French; Pentecostalism gave him a way to heal his hatred. Brother Maracle was not the only man who reported a major miracle; Brother Cree and Brother Dann also experienced dramatic physical healing later in their careers.⁴² All four defined Pentecostalism in terms of healing: physical, mental and spiritual. Jesus had moved from being “the white man’s God” to the “Great Healer.” Brothers Lee, Dann, Maracle and Cree took their experiences to their people, hoping to find a way to save them not only from sin, but more importantly, from hundreds of years of injustice, racism, and mistreatment.

Besides healing, Pentecostalism offered these four men autonomy and leadership. As Wacker has stated, “The testimony clothes individual lives with timeless significance.”⁴³ Brothers Lee, Dann, Maracle, and Cree all wanted to help their people in some manner, and in their eyes, Pentecostalism gave them the means to change the world. Upon conversion, white Pentecostal believers encouraged all four men to attend Bible college, which they did. While they were students at those colleges, colleagues encouraged them to become missionaries. Within the AG system, these Indian men

⁴² Rodger Cree, Interview; Dann, 11.

⁴³ Wacker, 69.

gained opportunity because of the belief in the primacy of the Holy Spirit. In Pentecostalism, one only needed the power of Holy Spirit to preach God's word; because all four had experienced such power, they held as much authority as any other Pentecostal, white or Indian. Like their white counterparts, they needed only a few gifts in order to go out and preach: a working knowledge of the Bible, a willingness to speak in public, and an ability to innovate. Pentecostal Indian leaders also embraced the supernatural. Sociologist Margaret Poloma explains how important this point is with respect to the modern Pentecostal clergy, noting that clergy are "also often mystics of the sort who may hear God speak in an audible voice, see visions and dream religious dreams, give prophecies, and act on the basis of prophetic meanings."⁴⁴ Native evangelists were mystics of exactly that type—they readily accepted the Pentecostal miraculous and wielded the authority of the miraculous to achieve their successes. While the testimonies of these four men fit in a familiar Pentecostal framework, they also show the motivations of men who truly believed that the Holy Spirit had chosen them to help their people. This belief carried them through all the difficulties they encountered in their lives and ministries.

4.2 The Great Physician

Indian missionaries, like their white contemporaries, emphasized the Gospel and the death and resurrection of Jesus. But they interpreted the Gospel according to their needs as Indians. They reshaped it as a Gospel of healing—not just from illness and

⁴⁴ Margaret M. Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 66.

alcoholism, but also from the bitterness of past wrongs and hatred of white people. Through published articles and pamphlets distributed to the greater AG public, Indian missionaries attempted to alleviate stereotypes and misconceptions of Indians. By interpreting the Gospel for their own purposes and disseminating to white Pentecostals information about their history and culture, Indian missionaries used their autonomy to fight paternalism and ethnocentrism. They presented a “performance of reconciliation” to their white counterparts and, in doing so “offer[ed] striking critiques of both past and present-day colonial practices.”⁴⁵ Thus, they defined themselves as Pentecostal Indians who embraced reconciliation.

Indian missionaries knew that most white Americans, including their own AG brothers and sisters, held misconceptions about Indians, and they sought to address them. Their main venue was the *PE*, which Indian missionaries used to their advantage. First, they educated the greater Pentecostal public on the wrongs done to American Indians, particularly by the government. With the exception of handful of outspoken early white missionaries, white Pentecostals rarely criticized the American government for its Indian policies. Most white Americans did not know what life was like on the reservations and did not really understand the intricacies of Indian policy, so it was left to Indian missionaries to explain how badly the American government had treated them.

The two events that Indian missionaries used to gain the public’s attention were the Cherokee’s Trail of Tears and the Navajo’s Long Walk, episodes that showed the

⁴⁵ Smith, 102.

cruelty and indifference of the American government. Notably, the two men who were responsible for the articles in the *PE* and subsequent tracts were not only significant Indian evangelists but also came from the Cherokee and the Navajo tribes.

John McPherson, a mixed-blood Cherokee, developed the “Trail of Tears” article and tract from a popular sermon he often used while evangelizing. The tract contains both a creative retelling of life on the trail and the historical facts of the forced march. Brother McPherson boldly asserted that many Christian Cherokees were among those removed from their homelands in North Carolina and Georgia. He also noted that the tribe aided the U.S. government in their battles against the Creek Indians.⁴⁶ Brother McPherson described the removal as especially brutal: “Men were seized in the fields; women were taken from their hearths; children were taken from their play and always if they looked back, the victims saw their homes in flames.”⁴⁷ He continued by vividly describing the forced march, undertaken in harsh winter weather, with an emphasis on the large numbers of women and children who died in the ordeal. His creative retelling parallels the eyewitness accounts written by the Baptist missionaries who witnessed the violence.⁴⁸

Brother McPherson hoped to arouse the sympathy of his white readers with a vivid account of government injustice and to inspire them to become missionaries to Indians. But the most informative part of the article is the closing paragraph, where Brother McPherson offered the Gospel as a means of reconciliation.

⁴⁶ John McPherson, The Trail of Tears, distributed by AG Home Missions, Record Group 11-56, Shelf Location 9/3/6, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, no page numbers given.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ For Account of Baptist Missionaries on the Trail of Tears, see William G. McLoughlin, Champions of the Cherokee: Evan and John B. Jones (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

But I, as a descendant of one who walked the death march, can hold no malice against my fellow man. For what has happened to my people I can harbor no ill in my heart because I have been born again and washed in Calvary's flow. God, the perfect Judge, in His own hour will settle the account and His judgment will be swift and sure and just. The "Trail of Tears" of the Cherokee is history. It has been duly recorded in eternity's archives awaiting the position of the Almighty. Let the judge of all the world weigh the action and the actors who must explain more than four thousand silent graves.⁴⁹

Brother McPherson stated that by becoming a Christian, he could move forward and leave behind his anger at those who inflicted so much pain. In essence, Pentecostal Christianity healed him from the wrongs of the past and allowed him to overcome his hate. Note that Brother McPherson strongly emphasized judgment: while it may seem that the government and President Jackson escaped punishment for their misdeeds, he believed they would have to face God and answer for their actions. Brother McPherson's tract offers an example not only of an accessible account of the cruelty of the government toward American Indians but also of how he as a missionary reshaped the Gospel.

Sister Coralie Lee, the white wife of Navajo missionary Charlie Lee, wrote "The Long Walk" tract. Like "The Trail of Tears," it saw publication as both a *PE* article and as a pamphlet for fellow Pentecostals. Also like "The Trail of Tears," "The Long Walk" emphasized the injustices of the federal government toward Indians (in this case, the Navajos), a piece of history that the American public largely ignored. The tract describes how the government, through its agent Kit Carson, starved Navajos who resisted removal

⁴⁹ McPherson, last page.

from their homeland. Sister Lee painted a vivid picture of Carson and his men slaughtering Navajo sheep herds and cutting down fruit trees in order to break the spirit of the Navajos. Most Navajos surrendered and gathered at Fort Defiance. Next, they found themselves forced to walk to Fort Sumner, where the government imposed an experiment on them.⁵⁰ The government forced the Navajos to become farmers and live in settled towns like the Pueblos, but the experiment failed. The government sent them back to their homeland to herd sheep.⁵¹

Sister Lee's purpose in writing this article was twofold. First, she hoped to educate Pentecostal readers about a major event in Navajo history. Second, she addressed the need for educated, indigenous missionaries and the money to support them. She states, "The great need is for the Indians themselves to go to Bible schools and come back as missionaries, especially to those who are unreached as yet due to the language barrier. But most Navajos are not wealthy enough to pay for schooling and families are large."⁵² Sister Lee understood that the most effective way to reach other Indians was by training Christian Indians to become missionaries. Like her husband, she had fully embraced the indigenous principle and was willing to take the risk of asking *PE* readers

⁵⁰ The majority of the Navajos who went to Fort Defiance were old men, women, and children. Most of the young warriors were killed in skirmishes with Carson's men, and those who survived hid in Canyon de Chelly with the few sheep herds that escaped government detection. For a readable popular history of Carson and his battle with the Navajos, see Hampton Sides, Blood and Thunder: An Epic of the American West (New York, Doubleday: 2006).

⁵¹ Coralie Lee, The Long Walk, distributed by AG Home Missions, Uncatalogued, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, no page numbers given.

⁵² Ibid.

for support and money to implement an idea that the white AG leadership did not completely accept.

Besides educating the general Pentecostal readers on Indian history, Indian evangelists used their writings to make their fellow Indians seem less exotic and alien and to clarify the special difficulties of reservation life. One article, written by Brother McPherson and Brother Paul Kienel, tried to dispel long-held stereotypes regarding Indians.

Often the published material about Indians is either sentimentally unrealistic or brutally untrue. Indians were and are neither ignorant and blood-thirsty savages, nor misunderstood heroes. Indians are human beings, living interesting lives in accordance with customs and beliefs which though ancient in origin, are greatly modified by several hundred years of contact with white people.⁵³

Unlike their white missionary colleagues, who generally emphasized the exotic or savage nature of the people, Indian missionaries wrote about the essential humanity of the people they served. Brothers McPherson and Kienel pointed out the diversity of Indians in North America, including the differences of language and customs.⁵⁴ They underscored the difficulty of evangelizing Indians without skilled missionaries who could speak the Native languages. In addition, they emphasized the terrible condition of the infrastructure of the reservations. Money for repairs and building would aid in the spread of the Gospel. Unemployment and poverty, were hard to overcome without help.⁵⁵ Although the article ended with a plea for donations to the AG's Indian home missions, Brothers McPherson

⁵³ John McPherson and Paul Kienel, "The First Americans," The Pentecostal Evangel, 31 August 1958, 14.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

and Kienel challenged stereotypes—stereotypes upon which their white counterparts played in the very same pages of the *PE*.

At the very heart of Pentecostalism lay its restorationist impulse, which allowed believers to frame the Gospel in terms of healing, miraculous events, and prophecy. For Indian missionaries, however, the focus on healing proved more internal and more collective. They framed healing in terms of release from the pains of racism and the injustices of history. This emphasis contrasted with that of white missionaries who tended to report specific physical healings. This is not to say that Native missionaries did not also experience direct physical healing. Many did. But those same men also reported a kind of spiritual healing, one that they felt gave them the power to navigate a new path in becoming a Pentecostal Indian. As noted, both Brother McPherson and Brother Cree felt that the Holy Spirit freed them from their personal hatred toward the white man. This idea of healing was not an anomaly, but rather the norm among Indian Pentecostals. For them, the most important sort of healing was one of the heart as well as spirit.

Indian missionaries often gave hints of their own view of healing in the articles they wrote for the *PE*. Brother Effman, a Klamath Indian, elegantly summed up Indian missionaries' approach.

When Christ enters the life He gives a new heart. This removes from the Indian all the former hatred and mistrust for the white man. Christ is the Great Physician and He can meet both the physical and spiritual needs of the heartsick Indian.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ George Effman, "The First Are Last," The Pentecostal Evangel, 25 February 1962, 12.

Even though Christ can “give a new heart,” as the majority of Indian evangelists believed, giving up old prejudices still proved hard. Brother Cree was careful to make this point.⁵⁷ Although he credited the Holy Spirit with helping him overcome his hatred of the French, it was at times painful and difficult, especially when the French did little to convince him that they deserved his forgiveness.⁵⁸

Native evangelists acknowledged the pain of the past and the atrocities their people had suffered. Even though most embraced the rhetoric of reconciliation, they held those who sinned against their people to account. Brother McPherson made this point strongly in his “Trail of Tears” sermon, stressing both judgment and the power of Christ to turn the deep anger of his fellow Indians into more productive feelings.

In recounting the migration into exile of the Cherokee in 1838, with its atrocities, its blood and death, we are appalled and rise up to protest the way the Cherokee were treated by fellow men. But I ask you, how have you treated the Christ, who left heaven and adorned in the robes of flesh, was born in a manger and later suffered and died that you might have life and have life more abundantly? He too walked a trail of tears, a journey of sorrows.⁵⁹

At the end of his sermon, Brother McPherson challenged his fellow Indians to understand that Christ was someone like themselves. Jesus was a poor man, despised by many and

⁵⁷ The language of “Christ giving a new, clean heart” is a striking foreshadowing of similar language that Native evangelical and Pentecostal leaders would use in the twenty-first century during their affiliation with the Promise Keepers. This pattern shows the continuity of rhetoric and theology between modern Native leaders who would join the Christian Right and the early AG leaders who pre-dated them by almost a half a century. Both groups stressed reconciliation and used similar rhetoric when talking about it. Smith calls this trend “performing reconciliation,” and points out how it shows that Native peoples defy categorization when it comes to how they employ conservative Christianity for their own uses. For more on this subject, see Smith, 99.

⁵⁸ Cree Interview.

⁵⁹ McPherson, Chief, 96.

eventually beaten and killed by his detractors. In others words, since Christ bore similarities to their fellow Indians, he could truly understand and address the difficulties of their lives and history. Brother McPherson believed that accepting Christ would change the harshness of Indian life and give his people hope, something he felt many lacked. In advocating forgiveness and reconciliation, evangelists like Brother Cree and Brother McPherson were attempting to live a true Christian life, one where they forgave those who had committed wrongs against their people. Their interpretation of the Gospel moved beyond the idea of salvation. For Indian evangelists, salvation and the gifts of the Holy Spirit were not enough to solve the ongoing problem of being an Indian in a country that over the centuries had stolen their land and destroyed their way of life. Brothers Cree and McPherson understood that their fellow Indians had to move beyond the wrongs of the past. Becoming a Pentecostal and embracing a Gospel of healing and reconciliation was one way for American Indians to do just that.

4.3 Traditional Religion

Indian missionaries deeply believed that the Gospel answered all their problems, but they still had to contend with traditional believers on the reservation. While some Indian missionaries regarded traditional religion as demonic, like their white counterparts, Brother Lee and Brother Cree articulated a more telling argument against traditional religion. Both believed that traditional religion could not help their people because it was not true Indian religion. They contended that because traditionalist religion was not actually “traditional,” it no longer contained the power that it once held and lacked answers to Indians’ modern-day problems.

According to Brother Charlie Lee, the problem with Indian religion was that its believers were not exactly sure what they believed. Brother Lee placed great emphasis on how the elders were no longer respected in Navajo society—he obviously thought that this lack of respect was a problem.

In the days of old, the people listened to the medicine man. They respected what he taught concerning spiritual things and upheld the moral standard, but now he was no longer a leader. The old folks were no longer respected because they were thought to be old fashioned...⁶⁰

Lee directly correlated the lack of respect toward one's elders with what he called a "low moral standard."⁶¹ In his view, many young Navajos had turned away from the strictness of the old ways and found themselves adrift in a sea of alcoholism, hatred, and misunderstanding. But Lee also felt that those who wanted to resurrect the "old ways" were misguided. "If you bring back Indian religion and pick out that part that appeals to you emotionally, that's not Indian religion... If you really want to go back to the old Indian ways, it's a strict life, a disciplined life. The old ways, were definitely strict and demanded conformity to certain standards of behavior, and you don't want that."⁶² Lee argued that the true "old ways" were no longer remembered by the Indian people; the way of life that had supported them had disappeared. Those who were claiming to return to them were eclectically choosing from past traditions, not totally participating in all the traditional practices.

⁶⁰ Lee, 10.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Turning Point, 18.

Brother Lee was not the only one who viewed Indian religion in this light. When asked about traditional religion on his reservation, Brother Rodger Cree replied: “Its [sic] only recent times that people have gravitated to this pan-American Indianism. They have adopted a lot of things they saw in the movies. Usually they are Sioux—they are going to wear a headdress, they are going to do this, they are going do that. It has nothing to do with who we are.”⁶³ According to Cree, each tribe had its own distinct identity and its own traditionally held religious beliefs. These no longer existed in their original form; the modern versions were simply “deceptions.” Brother Lee and Brother Cree thought their fellow Indians could move beyond the problems of reservation life by accepting Pentecostalism and establishing a truly “indigenous, self-perpetuating church.”⁶⁴

Although Brother Lee embraced the Gospel of reconciliation, he clearly believed that Christianity could only be successful on the reservation if the church advocating for it was indigenous. He argued that Indians mistrusted white people with good reason because white missionaries had mistreated Indians. Therefore, the only way that Indians would wholly embrace Christianity was if it were fully indigenous and responsive to their needs.⁶⁵

Brothers Cree and Lee understood that progress for Indian society lay in a religion’s ability to address the problems of both the past and present. They did not think that traditional religion could address those problems, but Christianity could. Moreover,

⁶³ Cree Interview.

⁶⁴ Turning Point, 18.

⁶⁵ Lee, 10-11. Brother Lee did not actively repudiate Navajo religion, and in his later years even consented to illustrate children’s books containing Navajo legends and myths. Vinda Windes, “Yel Ha Yah’s Second Career—Charles Lee,” New Mexico Magazine, July 1977, 15.

both were adamant that by becoming Christians they were not forfeiting what made them Indians. Instead, they overturned the traditionalist argument that one repudiated one's Indian identity by becoming a Christian. They affirmed that the only way one could be a moral and righteous Indian was to become a Christian. For them, conversion strengthened one's Indian identity.⁶⁶

4.4 Innovation on the Mission Field

On entering the mission field, most Indian evangelists and missionaries had to confront the practical problems involved in saving souls. Limited funds and the racism of greater American society hindered Native missionaries more than their white missionary brothers and sisters. Together with their white colleagues, they wrestled with same mundane problems, including how to build churches on reservation land and attract potential converts. But they enjoyed one distinct advantage over their white counterparts: as Indians they possessed a better sense of the culture and society that they were serving. Within the realm of church building and evangelizing, they often enjoyed a great deal of autonomy. Once on the reservations, particularly remote desert reservations, and left alone by white district officials, Native missionaries had to rely on themselves for how to build churches and win converts. They took advantage of their autonomy and became

⁶⁶ In Smith's work on modern Native evangelicals, she also makes similar findings in regard to attitudes toward traditional religion: "They pointed out to me that some Native evangelical writings that critique syncretism are strategic. That is, they are written to be persuasive specifically to evangelicals who might reject the inclusion of all Native cultural practices within Christianity. In fact, some Native evangelicals do not separate Native spirituality and Native culture and do not see the practice of traditional Native spirituality as a contradiction to Christianity" (84-86). Charlie Lee's thoughts are mainly recorded through official documents, so it is possible that he was being strategic in his statements to official Pentecostal periodicals like the *PE*. It is also telling that he only mentioned that he was illustrating a book of traditional Navajo legends to *New Mexico Magazine*, a secular periodical, rather than to the *PE*. Smith, 85.

creative in their approaches. In doing this, they also embraced a distinctly pragmatic Pentecostal attitude toward innovation. In this way, too, they continued to define their Pentecostal Indian identity.

The building of Brother Charlie Lee's church in Shiprock, New Mexico illustrates one distinct advantage Indian missionaries had, despite their lack of resources: they knew how to overcome the obstacles that the tribal governments put in the way. On graduation from Central Bible Institute in Springfield, Missouri in 1951, Brother Lee returned to the Shiprock region of the Navajo reservation, where he grew up. He set out preaching in Navajo but worked more than a year before gaining any converts. Navajos lived in small family units, scattered sparsely around the reservation. Brother Lee had no land of his own on the reservation, and there was no place for a church. He and his wife lived seventy miles away from the Shiprock area in Cortez, Colorado, and endured a long desert commute over dirt roads.⁶⁷ Brother Lee understood that in order to acquire land for a house and a church, he would have to deal with the powerful Navajo tribal council, which during the early 1950s remained split between "progressives" and "traditionalist" factions. Only a Navajo-speaking missionary could have gone before the tribal council, because the elders conducted the council meetings in the Navajo language. The tribal council had the power to give Brother Lee the land needed for a church and parsonage,

⁶⁷ Ruth Lyon, "Navajo Artist Builds a Church For His People," The Pentecostal Evangel, 24 April 1960, 9.

but after three attempts he only received enough land to build a house, as was his rightful claim as a Navajo.⁶⁸

Although he could afford to build only a two-room house, Brother Lee completed the building and started to hold services there. He continued lobbying the tribal council, which had denied him the permit to build a church because they claimed that there were already enough churches in the Shiprock area.⁶⁹ Still, Brother Lee persisted, and while he did not openly challenge the tribal council's power, he continued evangelizing and holding meetings in his house. Finally, during his third petition a Navajo elder stood and spoke on behalf of Lee. "'Now,' he said, 'this young man has returned and wants to start a church, and we are fighting him. He is entitled to have a piece of land but he has been considerate enough of our authority to channel his request through our Tribal Council. I think we ought to let him have his request.'"⁷⁰ The tribal council granted him the permit to build a church, rewarding Lee's persistence. In 1957, Brother and Sister Lee moved into their small church and continued their ministry. By 1961, they had as many as three hundred Sunday school students, and Lee's work in spreading the Gospel in Navajo began to attract the attention of the white AG leadership.⁷¹ Lee's patience and willingness to work with both the tribal government and local elders gained the respect of the Navajo people. He also showed the AG that indigenous leaders could address the difficulties of reservation evangelization more effectively than their white counterparts.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Turning Point, 15.

Brother Lee was not the only Indian missionary who used his cultural knowledge to build a church for his people. Arthur Stoneking, a Winnebago evangelist, did the same when he built an all-Indian church in the American city with the largest urban Indian population, Los Angeles. Brother Stoneking arrived there shortly after his discharge from the Navy—he had fought in the battles of Okinawa and Iwo Jima in 1945. He married a Pentecostal woman and converted shortly thereafter at the First Assembly of God in Maywood, California.⁷² Brother Stoneking knew of the federal relocation program that had placed many Indians in urban areas, and he sought to reach out to them.⁷³ He knew it would be a daunting task, first because of the size of the city, and second because most Indians did not like to mingle with members of other tribes. The third problem that Stoneking faced was identifying fellow Indians in the city. He approached these difficulties with typical Pentecostal aplomb combined with a distinctly Indian approach to evangelization.

At the time that Brother Stoneking was hoping to found an urban Indian congregation, he was also driving the school bus for the Maywood Christian School. This job gave him the opportunity to identify local Indian children. Through the children, he contacted the parents. Once he had enough interested people, Brother and Sister Stoneking organized a Bible study in their home, where they converted several families and began the work of building a church.⁷⁴ By 1959, even before he had his own church

⁷² Ruth Lyon, “Evangelizing the American Indian” (Part 3), The Pentecostal Evangel, 22 October 1961, 18.

⁷³ Arthur Stoneking, “Indians in Los Angeles,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 1 December 1959, 12.

⁷⁴ Lyon, “Evangelizing,” 18.

building, Brother Stoneking had established an indigenous Sunday school led by five Indian lay leaders of the Navajo, Maricopa, and Choctaw tribes.

The Bell Gardens Assembly of God aided Brother Stoneking by allowing his Indian congregation to meet in their building on Sunday nights. The same congregation later gave Brother Stoneking an empty lot for his church.⁷⁵ On June 21, 1964, a crowd of 450 came to the dedication of the new all-Indian church in Bell Gardens. The congregation represented more than thirty tribes and three different choirs sang in various Indian languages.⁷⁶ Brother Stoneking's choir eventually became one of the most successful ministries in his church. By the late 1960s the choir was traveling the Indian camp-meeting circuit, testifying and singing in a variety of Native languages.⁷⁷ Brother Stoneking also signed a contract with a Long Beach radio station, KGER, where on Saturday evenings his parishioners preached in their Native languages and then translated the program into English. Eventually, his radio program became so popular that Christian stations in Tucson, Gallup, and Phoenix adopted it.⁷⁸

By emphasizing the similarities among Indian cultures, Brother Stoneking was able to build a successful mission in an urban area where Indians were living in different neighborhoods without the familial or tribal networks that had sustained them on the reservations. The Indian Revival Center substituted for the community that Indians had

⁷⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁷⁶ Author Unknown, "Attractive New Indian Church Erected Near Los Angeles," The Pentecostal Evangel, 28 February 1965, 16.

⁷⁷ Author Unknown, "Indian Revival Crusades Are Successful," The Pentecostal Evangel, 18 June 1967, 26.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

known on the reservations they had recently left. Within this community, composed of a variety of tribes from almost everywhere in the nation, they found fellow Indians who understood their hardships and homesickness. While Brother Stoneking built his church on these common Indian experiences, he was able to launch his successful radio and music ministries only because of tribal differences. Since his church was so diverse and many of the congregants spoke traditional languages, Brother Stoneking utilized this knowledge in order to launch successful evangelization that appealed to Indians from different tribes. The diversity of the church members could have pulled the Indian Revival Center apart, but it led instead to its growth and popularity, as local Indians flocked to it after hearing its radio programs or seeing members of the All-Indian Revival Choir testify in their own languages. By encouraging his congregants to speak in their Native tongues, he went beyond the English-only evangelization of many of his white counterparts and nurtured the Pentecostal Indian identity of his flock.

4.5 Lay Leadership

Brother Stoneking relied heavily on lay leadership in order to build an indigenous church, but he was not the only missionary, white or Indian, to encourage the laity. Lay leadership had always been essential in Pentecostal congregations, and missionaries established typical AG lay-leadership groups in their Indian churches. These included the Men's Fellowships, Women's Missionary Conferences, and Christ's Ambassadors for youth. While all of these forms of lay involvement were distinctly Pentecostal, Indian converts brought to them their own emphases and points of view.

By 1964, six different Men's Fellowship groups were active among Indian congregations.⁷⁹ Though typical AG Men's Fellowship groups emphasized spiritual concerns, the Indian MF groups often found that their churches most needed their manual labor. The lack of funds and muscle power that made building churches on the reservation so difficult meant that missions benefited greatly from MF workers. At the Canyon Day Apache Mission, Apache members of the MF "planted trees all around the mission property, decorated the interior of the auditorium, built a new altar and platform and put matching plywood in the walls... they also plan to build tables and benches in the Sunday school platform."⁸⁰ MF members put skills often acquired as day laborers to use maintaining the mission church. The men also volunteered in other areas. In addition to teaching Sunday school, preaching, and testifying in their native languages, one MF group from Brother Lee's Shiprock Mission found a particular calling in jail ministry. According to the *PE*, Navajo members of the Shiprock MF proved more effective than white missionaries in prison ministry because "many of the men had occupied cells in the jail before their conversion, so now they can testify to the saving grace of the Lord."⁸¹ As former inmates, some Navajo MF members understood the problems that their jailed fellow Navajos faced and were able to evangelize more successfully.

The female equivalent to the MF was the Women's Missionary Conference, which tended to both the practical and spiritual needs of the mission. Just as the Navajo men had contributed much to the church through the MF, Apache women, as members of

⁷⁹ Ruth Lyon, "MF Active on Indian Reservations," *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 27 December 1964, 20.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 21

the WMC, reinforced their identity as Pentecostal Indians through their service work. During their meetings, the members of the WMC of Canyon Day, Arizona, spent time in Bible study and prayer as well as sewing and maintenance work for their church. They also saw to some of the mundane aspects of church life by cleaning the sanctuary and sewing colorful quilts to hang on the walls. Moreover, the Apache women innovated in ways that were distinctly Indian.⁸² In an article on Apache lay work, one *PE* writer noted: “Our women won forty ribbons at the Apache Indian Tribal Fair for their sewing, cooked foods, etc., and our Assemblies of God booth won first prize. This gave them an opportunity to witness and pass out over four thousand tracts in the two days.”⁸³ This statement shows how Apache WMC members changed Pentecostal evangelization methods. Typically, missionaries, especially white ones, discouraged their Indian converts from attending traditional tribal gatherings because they could lead to sin. The Canyon Day Apache WMC, however, subverted this logic and turned a traditional gathering into a means of evangelization. By entering the various cooking and sewing contests, they acknowledged their Apache identity, participated in a traditional tribal celebration, and claimed their right to be present at the tribal fair. As Pentecostals, they used their attendance to evangelize fellow Apaches. Like the Navajo members of the MF, the Apache members of the WMC used their service work to show that they identified as Pentecostal Indians.

⁸² Leo and Mary Gilman, “These Apaches Serve the Lord Diligently,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 28 June 1959, 9.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

The Christ's Ambassadors program provided leadership experience for young adults. By the early 1960s, a handful of Indian AG congregations, including Sister Washburn's All-Tribes Mission in Phoenix, had adopted CA groups. The All-Tribes CA group consisted of enthusiastic young evangelists who spent their time in outreach ministry among urban Indians. They concentrated particularly on the local Indian hospital and jail.⁸⁴ The All-Tribes CA distinguished themselves in their work at the Phoenix Indian Boarding school, where they met on Sunday nights and led worship among the Pentecostal students. Their leadership both allowed the Pentecostal students to continue to practice their faith while they attended federal boarding school and helped the students form ties among the local Pentecostal community.⁸⁵

The AG discovered that lay leadership organizations could indeed flourish among well-established Indian congregations in ways that were similar to those in white churches, but in other ways these groups became distinctly Indian. The MF, WMC, and CA all performed their expected functions: members of the MF maintained their church buildings and evangelized local men, the women of the WMC served their churches by performing "women's work" such as sewing and cooking, and the CA evangelized the community. But the Indian members in each of these bodies shouldered new duties in order to serve their fellow Indians. The members of the MF aided and evangelized Indian inmates in jails where they themselves once might have been prisoners, the women of the WMC entered cooking and sewing contests at traditional tribal gatherings as a means of

⁸⁴ Alma Thomas, "Phoenix Indian CA's Have Outreach Ministry," The Pentecostal Evangel, 10 June 1962, 25.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

evangelizing, and the CA worked among their peers at the local boarding school. These adaptations not only allowed the groups to reinforce their identities as Pentecostals and Indians but also brought them autonomy within the AG system. Their service as congregation members of AG churches and missions gave meaning to their work with the lay groups, and they found that they could exercise authority and bring about innovation among their fellow Indian Pentecostals. Lay leadership opportunities gave ordinary Indian converts a voice in running their own churches.

4.6 Dressing Up Like an Indian

American Indian leaders faced a problem that their white missionary contemporaries rarely thought about: how should they dress in public? As Indians, the different evangelists held distinct tribal identities, but as members of the AG, they had to contend with a white bureaucracy that saw them as all the same. Though many *PE* pictures show Indian evangelists dressed just like their white counterparts in the dark, formal suit of the era, by the mid-1950s, pictures also appear showing Indian leaders in Indian costume. The evidence from the period is sketchy; in most cases, it is unclear why some Indians wore a tribal costume while others did not. But one evangelist did give an explanation.

Brother John McPherson wore his famous Plains headdress although he was a Cherokee.⁸⁶ He donned the headdress on the advice of a white minister. Early in Brother McPherson's evangelization career in California, he met a genial white AG pastor,

⁸⁶ Brother McPherson's headdress is on display at the AG's Heritage Museum, which is located on the bottom floor of the AG's National Headquarters in Springfield, Missouri.

Brother C.E. Pershing.⁸⁷ The latter took an interest in Brother McPherson's early work and helped him attend the local AG Bible college. When Brother McPherson entered the ministry, Brother Pershing advised him to define himself as an Indian.

He told me he felt impressed by the Lord that I should buy an Indian suit and use it when I preached. He felt it would draw needed attention to the plight of my Indian brothers and sisters, and it would also be something different and novel that would draw the unsaved to the services... I had no reason to buy the suit and no money with which to make such a purchase, but I felt Bro. Pershing had truly heard from the Lord.⁸⁸

Brother Pershing lent Brother McPherson \$350 to buy the Indian suit, but this left Brother McPherson with a problem: "I had no idea where to go buy a suit like Brother Pershing had in mind. All right, I was an Indian, but I had never worn the leather costume and full bonnet he was talking about."⁸⁹ Shortly thereafter, on a trip to Phoenix, he encountered a man at a trading post who sold Indian clothing, but not the type he wanted. The dealer told him to look up Pawnee Bill's Trading Post, which carried the full Plains warrior suit.⁹⁰ Brother McPherson wrote to Pawnee Bill's for a catalogue and picked out his costume, noting that it was "a complete Indian costume: a full leather suit, beautiful feather bonnet, leather breachclout, etc."⁹¹ Brother McPherson purchased the Indian clothing although it did not match his tribal affiliation—Cherokees did not wear the kind of war bonnet that was so popular among Plains tribes.

⁸⁷ McPherson, Chief, 72.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 74-75.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Once outfitted in his Indian costume, Brother McPherson wore it for most of his public appearances. The pictures in his autobiography—including the one on the cover—show him resplendent in a full Plains war bonnet and leather suit. *PE* pictures also usually showed the same. Brother McPherson acquired a variety of war bonnets: the AG still owns not only the large one on display in its archive museum, but also two other smaller versions locked in the archives vault.⁹² McPherson claimed that when he purchased his first suit, “I had no idea that I was entering into a relationship with the good people at Pawnee Bill’s that would stretch for over 40 years of ministry.”⁹³ But the relationship proved to be a crucial one indeed.

Although Brother McPherson consistently wore his Indian suit in his public appearances, he recognized it played into white stereotypes of what a “real” Indian looked like. In his autobiography, Brother McPherson noted that Western movies flourished in the 1950s and 1960s. Consequently, the publicity photos of him in the suit helped draw curiosity seekers who wanted to see a “real” Indian.⁹⁴ Brother McPherson also acknowledged that his suit was especially useful for children’s ministry because its bright colors and exotic appearance piqued their curiosity.⁹⁵ He created an entire “Indian skit” as a way to draw children into his work, prominently featuring the suit and a teepee

⁹² For examples, see the pictures accompanying the following articles: Author Unknown, “God’s Power Manifested in Sacramento Indian Convention,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 29 July 1956, 8; Arthur Stoneking “Indians in Los Angeles,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 12 January 1957, 12; Author Unknown, “American Indians Meet,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 12 June 1955, 10.

⁹³ McPherson, *Chief*, 101.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

that he built from a design in a book.⁹⁶ The tepee, like the suit, was not a part of Cherokee culture, yet Brother McPherson felt that these objects proved effective for his ministry and helped him save souls, so he was justified in using them.⁹⁷

Saving souls came with a cultural price. The suit not only played into typical white stereotypes of Indians, it also trivialized the traditional culture and tribal ties of Brother McPherson. He was a mixed-blood Cherokee wearing a generic Hollywood rendition of a Plains Indian warrior suit. Most ordinary Indians retained some traditional dress that was not as garish as the Indian suit and proved more functional—velvet skirts for Navajo women, elaborate hairstyles for Hopi women, and traditional jewelry that graced the bodies of both men and women from any number of tribes. As a rule, Indians did not wear traditional dress everyday. They tended to dress like working class or poor Americans—especially the men, whose standard uniform was that of the day laborer: jeans, t-shirt, flannel over-shirt, and heavy boots. Ordinary Indian dress would not draw the white American public, however, and Brother McPherson understood that he would garner more attention if he wore Indian costume rather than the standard three-piece suit of a Pentecostal evangelist.

Encouraging local Natives to dress up in costume, however, proved common among white missionaries to a variety of native peoples, as historian Susan Billington Harper pointed out in her work on white Anglican missionaries to India. In India, white

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ For more on Westerns and how they were used to construct American's popular conception of Indians, see Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 96-103.

mentors and leaders pressured the first native Anglican bishop to “dress like an Indian,” which deeply bothered the bishop; he rejected their ideas outright.⁹⁸ Brother McPherson, in contrast, embraced the Indian suit and developed his ministry around it. The reactions of his fellow Indian missionaries and evangelists to his colorful costume remain unknown, but Brother McPherson turned up in photographs at Indian conventions and meetings wearing the suit while standing next to his fellow evangelists.

Brother McPherson’s costume also relates to the “Hobby Indians” cultural phenomenon of the 1950s. At the time that Brother Pershing encouraged Brother McPherson to wear the Plains Indian suit, white “Hobby Indians” had begun to emerge. These were white people who traveled the “hobby powwow” circuit in order to dance and sing with real Indians and promote Indian culture and arts and crafts.⁹⁹ They paid “real Indians” to sing and dance with them, they wore elaborate costumes, and they constructed their own “white Indian” identity. These “hobby powwows” grew popular with white Americans, and although we do not know for sure, they might have given Brother Pershing the idea to encourage Brother McPherson to dress up in a Plains suit. As Philip Deloria states, “Racially different and temporally separate, Indians were objects of desire, but only as they existed outside of American society and modernity itself.”¹⁰⁰ Dressed in his Plains suit, Brother McPherson transformed himself into a powerful conception of what an Indian was: different, “other,” and exotic. By taking advantage of

⁹⁸ Susan Billington Harper, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma: Bishop V.S. Azariah and the Travails of Christianity in British India* (Cambridge, UK, William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co: 2000), 140-143.

⁹⁹ Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), esp. chap. 5.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 135.

those white conceptions of “Indian-ness,” Brother McPherson drew large crowds, expanding his opportunities for evangelization. In some ways, Brother McPherson bested a white leadership that encouraged a Cherokee to “play Indian” by dressing up as a Sioux: by willingly showing himself off as “other” and agreeing to wear the costume so as not to offend his white superiors, Brother McPherson gained authority that eventually led him to a leadership role as the first National Indian Representative. Because he appeared amenable to the input of white leadership, the AG chose him as Indian Representative, likely believing that he would continue to comply with their requests. In this position, however, he would go on to challenge subtly the very white leadership that had “otherized” him in the first place.

While a few other Indian evangelists chose to wear an Indian suit during their public ministry, most did not. Pictures from the *PE* demonstrate that Brother Andrew Maracle sometimes wore a traditional Mohawk headdress and suit and that Brother James F. Pepper, another Cherokee evangelist, wore a traditional Plains war bonnet.¹⁰¹ But the pictures in the *PE* indicate that the majority of the Indian evangelists wore the dark suits of the 1950s and 1960s. Most men in the AG dressed in this manner, especially evangelists and pastors, and from the pictures in the *PE*, Indian evangelists literally followed suit. Doing so did not mean they were rejecting their Indian culture; rather, they were adhering to the norms of Pentecostal evangelists and pastors. One of the most militantly indigenous evangelists of the 1950s and 1960s, Brother Charlie Lee, was never

¹⁰¹ Ruth Lyon, “Evangelizing the American Indian,” 18.

shown in a costume in Pentecostal publications. The *PE* always photographed him in a dark suit, even in pictures that showed him in action around his church. It was not until the late 1970s, after his church had become the first indigenous church in the AG, that pictures showed Brother Lee in everyday, Navajo dress: a dark velveteen shirt and lots of Navajo silver jewelry.¹⁰² Brother Lee's use of Indian clothing differed from Brother McPherson's. Brother Lee wore everyday dress that accurately reflected his tribal affiliation, not a spectacular costume like Brother McPherson's. Moreover, Lee's pattern of dress endured. To this day, most Indian evangelists prefer to wear a business suit when appearing in public, like the rest of their AG contemporaries. When I met and interviewed Mohawk evangelists Brother Roger Cree and current AG Indian Representative Brother John Maracle, nephew of Andrew Maracle, they both wore formal lightweight summer suits, accessorized with touches of traditional Indian jewelry.

Brother McPherson's Indian outfit points to a number of problems, most of which the sources do not explain. On one hand, that a white AG pastor suggested that Brother McPherson wear an Indian suit highlights the paternalism and ethnocentrism so common in white AG missions to Indians. On the other hand, perhaps Brother McPherson's acceptance of the Indian suit can be seen as a way of developing his own particular Pentecostal Indian identity. Although of Cherokee ancestry, Brother McPherson was mixed-blood. Perhaps he felt that the Indian suit helped to legitimize him as an Indian in the eyes of his audience. Brother Lee, however, was a full-blooded Navajo who looked

¹⁰² Turning Point, 2.

Navajo and spoke Navajo. Perhaps he felt that he had to wear a “white man’s suit” in order to legitimize himself as an AG evangelist. The motivations of these two men, as well as of their contemporaries, are lost to us. Almost all of them are dead, and they left behind no written record on the issue. But the dress of Indian missionaries is important to consider, because it shows that some Indian missionaries struggled with how to balance their Indian and Pentecostal identities.¹⁰³

4.7 Conclusion

American Indian AG missionaries understood the difficulties that faced them in their fight to spread the Gospel. Life for most American Indians in the 1950s and 1960s was harsh, whether on or off the reservation. Indian missionaries personally knew the scourges of government dependency, alcoholism, and racism. More than white missionaries, they knew intimately how these problems affected the lives of Indians. For example, during one evangelistic tour, Brother McPherson noticed a group of Indian women going out to pick cactus flowers for food. When he asked if the flowers were particularly tasty or nutritious, the women replied in the negative, but added that it was the only food available. Brother McPherson wrote:

I prepared to preach the message that night, but my mind kept going back to the conversation with those ladies. It’s hard to receive the gospel when your belly is empty... While we enjoy the comfort of a lovely home, many of the people of the reservation live in squalor. Somewhere today while we enjoy our evening meal there is an Indian family

¹⁰³ Philip Deloria writes about the problems swirling around how modern Native peoples represent themselves and how they are represented in the public by the media in “Indian Wars, The Movie” in Indians in Unexpected Places (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 52-108.

dipping a dried tortilla in a bean pot. While we drive our new car to a lovely edifice for worship, that Indian family is making its way down a rattlesnake infested trail to a mud church without even a floor. More than just numbers of statistics, this kind of poverty has names and faces that present themselves again and again in my reverie.¹⁰⁴

For many Indians, life was tough. AG Indian missionaries understood this, and desperately fought to change it.

Perhaps the greatest struggle for twentieth century American Indians was to retain their Indian identity while participating in the greater American culture. Native Pentecostals offered a way to mediate this struggle. Once converted, Pentecostal Indians defined themselves as born-again believers whom the Holy Spirit had selected specifically to serve their own people. The AG offered a place for them; they received an education and exercised their autonomy to innovate on the mission field. As a group, they reworked the Gospel to emphasize not only the redemptive power of Christ's death and resurrection, but also his healing power over an ugly past, hatred, and racism. For the Indian missionaries, Pentecostalism became the only truly indigenous option for their people, because they believed that traditional religion no longer spoke to their people's needs. Once they arrived on reservations or in Indian neighborhoods, they built congregations and encouraged lay leadership and congregational participation, thereby extending to their people the autonomy that they had found in the AG system. They struggled with how they should physically portray themselves in dress; whatever their

¹⁰⁴ McPherson, Chief, 127.

answer they established public personae as missionaries who were both Indian and Pentecostal.

Detractors of Pentecostalism might charge that Pentecostal Indians “sold out” their traditional beliefs to become Christians, that conversion erased converts’ tribal cultures, or that Indian missionaries were simply witless tools of the white AG establishment. The history I have described shows how such assumptions lack nuance, for Native people have been shaping their own religious identities since contact. When Indians converted to Pentecostalism, they did not just decide to fall into place behind the white leaders of the AG. Instead, they actively engaged the denomination to build their own churches, beliefs and leadership. They *chose* their Pentecostal Indian identity and created something new and innovative within the AG.

By the late 1960s, the missionaries’ development of a Pentecostal Indian identity was beginning in earnest. Although the Pentecostal Indian leadership as a whole benefited from the general autonomy of the AG home missions network, they began to demand a voice within the institution. Displeased that they possessed no official voice to speak for them at the General Council, Indian missionaries asked for a nationally appointed Indian representative long before the AG was willing to consider the option.¹⁰⁵ Despite the unwillingness of the AG hierarchy, Indian missionaries fought the General Council until 1979, when Brother McPherson became the first nationally appointed AG Indian Representative. In 1976, Charlie Lee’s church became the first district-affiliated

¹⁰⁵ Initial lobbying for an Indian Representative started in 1955, according to John Maracle, who has held the post since 2000. Notably, the General Council minutes did not record the request of Brothers Lee, McPherson, and Andrew Maracle.

indigenous church, and by the late 1970s, enrollments at the American Indian Bible Institute were growing. The institutionalization of the indigenous principle had finally begun.

5. Chapter 4: Institutionalizing the Indigenous Principle: The American Indian College and Mesa View Assembly of God

Sister Alta Washburn had a problem. After many years on the mission field in Arizona, she faced competition from an independent Christian evangelist for the souls of the Phoenix area Indians.¹ The evangelist's emotional preaching style horrified Sister Washburn, and, in her opinion, he exploited people.² She believed that she was losing Indian converts to him because they did not possess a solid biblical education. In her mind, the AG, though not perfect, represented firm, biblically based, evangelical teaching. This experience convinced Sister Washburn that the only way she could encourage the conversion of Indians and loyalty to the AG was through well-educated Indian missionaries and evangelists. Unsure of where to turn, Sister Washburn prayed. A few days later, she received her answer.

Plainly the Lord spoke to me, "There came a bear and a lion, and there came Goliath who roared against the camp of Israel. What did David do? He arose in the name of the Lord God of Israel. He laid hold of the bear, the lion and Goliath. He did more than pray. He attacked them and prevailed." As I left the meeting I was more assured than ever that God would help us build a Bible school for American Indians. There they could learn to fight the good

¹ Sister Washburn gives no date for this incident in her autobiography. Since it happened while she was working in Phoenix, we can safely assume it took place sometime between 1950-1956. Alta Washburn, Autobiography: Trail to the Tribes (Springfield, Mo.: self-published, 1990), 47-48.

² Ibid.

fight of faith with sound Bible doctrine against the bears,
the lions and the Goliaths who might come against them.³

A white, female missionary who had completed only middle school, Sister Washburn identified closely with the young David, who had battled Goliath. In this case, Goliath proved to be not only the ministerial competition, but also the AG hierarchy.

Initially Sister Washburn had a hard time convincing white AG missionaries to support her idea for an all-Indian Bible school. Her fellow missionaries feared that if they sent converts to the Bible school, they would never return to the reservation. Others questioned the need for a Bible school and wondered how she would find the money to build it.⁴ But Sister Washburn clung to her vision, bolstered by letters of support from like-minded missionaries. She wrote to Brother C.M. Ward of California for guidance. Ward, a rapidly rising star in AG circles, responded with encouragement. “‘Sister Washburn,’ he wrote back, ‘keep yelling about that Bible school. Someone will hear you.’”⁵ Sister Washburn kept yelling. She spoke so loudly and clearly that no one, even the AG hierarchy in Springfield, could ignore her. In September 1957, against significant odds, Sister Washburn’s all-Indian Bible school opened. By holding to her convictions, she changed the face of AG Bible school education and forced the AG to recognize the needs of its Indian converts.

Sister Washburn was not the only missionary who made the AG grapple with the indigenous principle. When Brother Charlie Lee arrived on the Navajo reservation in the

³ Ibid., 48-49.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

1940s and began preaching in Navajo, fellow missionaries, white and Indian, took notice. He asked his congregation to negotiate the transition from being a supported mission to a fully indigenous, self-supporting, district-affiliated church. In 1976, his Navajo church became the first AG home mission to give up its mission status in favor of a district-affiliated church.⁶ Lee's work among the Navajos set off a national push for AG Native-run churches.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the implementation of the indigenous principle in the AG home missions program proved painful and slow for both white and Native missionaries. Native evangelists and their sympathetic white counterparts launched a two-pronged movement toward realizing the indigenous principle. This chapter explores the first part: the effort to create indigenous churches and the development of the American Indian College of the Assemblies of God.⁷ The following chapter considers the long struggle for a National American Indian representative to the AG's General Council and for tangible power within the AG.

The leaders of the indigenous church movement and the founder of the AIC were quintessential Pentecostal outsiders: an uneducated white female missionary and a famous Navajo artist-turned-evangelist. Both Sister Washburn and Brother Lee carried little more than the support of their families and congregations and their belief in the

⁶Author Unknown, "Navajo Indian Church becomes Indigenous," The Pentecostal Evangel, 10 August 1979, 8-9.

⁷ Alta Washburn's Bible school bore many different names over the years. It began as the All-Tribes Bible School. When it was formally taken over by the AG, the denomination renamed it the American Indian Bible Institute, then later the American Indian Bible College. In 2009 its name was the American Indian College of the Assemblies of God.

power of the Holy Spirit. They were missionaries who served one of the poorest populations in the United States in the harshest of environments. Both enjoyed deep ties to the Native peoples of the American Southwest and understood their converts. Moreover, Sister Washburn and Brother Lee embodied the pragmatic and restorationist impulses that characterized the Pentecostal experience.⁸ Sister Washburn and Brother Lee believed in their ability, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to transform the AG so it would meet the needs of their flocks. They hoped to shape the Pentecostal vision of the church and to integrate a population regarded by most white Pentecostals as outsiders.

This chapter argues that the individual work and lives of Brother Lee and Sister Washburn prodded the AG to take up the challenge of embracing the indigenous principle in its home missions to American Indians. This pressure paved the way for later institutional recognition of American Indian leadership. Sister Washburn's AIC helped solidify Pentecostal Indian identity, while Brother Lee's push for indigenous churches was the culmination of Melvin Hodges's indigenous principle. The first section of the chapter begins with a short history of AG Bible colleges, followed by the birth, building, and history of the all-Indian Bible school. I then explore life at the school, as well as some of the tensions that erupted among the students. The section concludes with a discussion of the changes once the AG officially took it over. The second section of the chapter focuses on Brother Lee, his Mesa View Assembly of God, and the indigenous church movement.

⁸ For the balance between the pragmatist and primitivist impulses in Pentecostalism, see Grant Wacker, Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

Both Sister Washburn and Brother Lee had their detractors. Many fellow Pentecostals believed that they would not be able to enact their ideas, and while the AG never openly opposed them, it impeded them. But Sister Washburn and Brother Lee, as well as their supporters, would not take no for an answer. With characteristic Pentecostal zeal, they pushed forward and realized their dreams for the church. In doing so, they changed the trajectory of the AG.

5.1 The Role of the Bible School in the Assemblies of God

Religious colleges post a long history in the United States. The first one, Harvard, was founded in 1636 to train Puritan ministers. The idea of a school for the evangelizing and training of American Indians was also old—Dartmouth College was initiated in 1736 for that purpose. The Assemblies of God followed in this tradition by establishing institutions that focused on biblical education. Bible schools had existed for decades; many had roots in the earlier Holiness movement. As the AG began to define its place in American Pentecostalism, it looked to the Bible school as a place where believers and future evangelists could gain what they considered a practical, biblically sound education.

The earliest Pentecostal Bible schools tended to be short-term schools. They focused on issues of faith and introductory interpretations of the Bible.⁹ They typically lacked proper facilities, textbooks, or standardized curricula.¹⁰ Consequently, the skills of the teachers mainly shaped the schools. What the schools lacked in academic quality,

⁹ L.F. Wilson, "Bible Institutes, Colleges, Universities," Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary McGee (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1988), 59.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

they made up for in zeal. Students often punctuated classes with spontaneous prayer and speaking in tongues. Because most of these schools proved short-lived, they usually only trained a small number of students.¹¹

More formal Bible schools and missionary institutes sprang out of the need to make sure that evangelists and missionaries were at least properly trained in doctrine and Biblical interpretation. Early Pentecostal leaders who received training at these schools encouraged the AG's General Council to consider the educational opportunities the denomination should offer its people.¹² According to historian Edith Blumhofer, the AG was suspicious of education in its secular form and grounded its approach in typical Pentecostal pragmatism.

The Council did not define education; the nature of the training that they wanted to provide was essentially indoctrination in fixed truth as perceived by the Fellowship... From one perspective, the Bible school training endorsed by early Assemblies of God leaders fit into the model contemporary fundamentalists were establishing: It set out to proclaim fixed truth and to locate where those who differed were in error. Its concerns were more practical than theoretical.¹³

The AG concerned itself with Bible schools to ensure sound doctrine and to control what their evangelists and ministers were preaching. From the outset, Pentecostal education was deeply practical and tied to the spreading of the Gospel. The mission of Pentecostal Bible schools resembled that of their conservative Protestant counterparts, but the

¹¹ Ibid., 59.

¹² Edith L. Blumhofer, The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 1: 313.

¹³ Ibid., 314.

education level of the students was lower and the schools were poorer, especially during their early years.¹⁴

The AG began to build a Bible school network starting in the early 1920s. Initially, supporters of Pentecostal education found themselves opposed by those who “disdained formal education as potentially ‘quenching’ the Spirit.”¹⁵ Supporters persevered, particularly those on the West Coast who in 1920 founded both the California Bible College in San Francisco and the Berean Bible Institute in San Diego. Although linked to the AG, these schools were not the first General Council-approved Bible schools. The first such institution came into being in 1922 when the AG launched the Central Bible Institute in Springfield, Missouri.¹⁶ Initially, the school was run by faithful instructors who received little or no pay, but as it grew, it added larger facilities and more staff.¹⁷ Admissions requirements and academic standards remained low, as CBI’s mission was to train missionaries and evangelists rather than to provide a college or university-level education. Since many students arrived at CBI ill prepared, it launched a one-year preparatory program in order to enable those with little education to enroll.¹⁸

With CBI as its flagship school, the AG tried to standardize the curricula of its Bible institutions. In 1925, the General Council voted that if a school could demonstrate

¹⁴ Virginia Brereton, Training God’s Army: The American Bible School (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 12-13.

¹⁵ Blumhofer, 1:316.

¹⁶ In 1920, the AG attempted to found its first Bible College in Auburn, Nebraska, but the Midwest Bible School failed almost immediately due to problems with the physical plant and a lack of funding. CBI was the first successful General Council Bible school. See Blumhofer, 1: 316.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:318.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:319.

that it met the same educational standards as CBI, then it was an AG Bible school and would enjoy the same standing as CBI. The members of the General Council also agreed that they should have representation on the boards of all AG-recognized Bible schools.¹⁹ By the 1930s, CBI established a correspondence school to support the laity who worked in churches, especially those responsible for Sunday school programs.²⁰ As the Bible school network grew, local Bible schools and AG-affiliated regional Bible schools began to spread, with their chief emphasis always on practical training for the ministry. In fact, Pentecostals remained suspicious of liberal arts and university education until 1955, when the AG founded Evangel College as its first liberal arts college.²¹ The AG recognized the need for advanced seminary education but moved slowly because of concerns that establishing a seminary would distract from Bible college education. Finally, in 1973, the AG founded the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary as a graduate school specifically for Bible college graduates.²² The AG had finally completed its educational system with a network of local Bible schools, accredited regional Bible colleges, a liberal arts college, and a graduate seminary.

Contrary to the convention that early Pentecostals opposed all forms of higher education, the history of the AG Bible school network demonstrates that Alta Washburn's wish for a Bible school for Indians was rooted in the Pentecostal mindset. The start of the All-Tribes Bible School (later AIC) followed a pattern established by the

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 1:325.

²¹ Ibid., 2:125.

²² Ibid., 2:128.

AG and the pioneers of the Bible school movement. At first, founders of Bible schools acted on a perceived need for a basic Pentecostal education geared toward the ministry and the development of one's Pentecostal faith. Schools, especially those that started without full AG backing, typically began as local Bible schools and expanded from there.²³

5.2 The Birth of the All-Tribes Bible School

Once Sister Washburn decided to go forward with her plans for her all-Indian Bible school, the project preoccupied her. She wrote, "I began to dream, talk, write and pray about the Bible school. The burden consumed me. The very thought of it excited my spirit because I knew I was moving in the center of God's will."²⁴ She spoke to all who would listen and sent letters to fellow missionaries. The Arizona district superintendent, J.K. Gressett, decided to meet with Sister Washburn and her supporters in Phoenix. The meeting took place on June 2, 1956, and along with the Washburns and Brother Gressett, Brothers Shores, Russell, Gribling, and Bruhn and Sister Elva Johnson all attended.²⁵ Sister Johnson was a local home missions colleague and a supporter of Sister Washburn's idea. The men were all AG ministers who supported Sister Washburn, albeit with some reservations. No American Indian missionaries or leaders attended the meeting, probably

²³ For an example of how the difficulties of (non-Pentecostal) Bible school life prepared students for faith missions, see Alwyn Austin, "Hotbed of Missions: The China Inland Mission, Toronto Bible College, and the Faith Missions-Bible School Connection," in The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home, eds. Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 134-151.

²⁴ Washburn, 49.

²⁵ No first names appeared in the document with the exception of Elva Johnson.

because at the time there were so few of them. It is also possible that no one thought to invite them.

It quickly became apparent that the men held reservations about Sister Washburn's idea. The minutes of the meeting indicate that she arrived with negative feelings created by the language the men had employed in their letters to her. Both the denominational leaders in Springfield and the men at the meeting believed that Sister Washburn's school should be called not a "Bible school" but a "Bible training school." The ministers also emphasized that the school would be a "local" institution, in no way linked to the AG's national Bible school network.²⁶ If Sister Washburn did not like this, the minutes do not show that she fought it, although she might have raised objections.²⁷ Sister Washburn probably knew she could not succeed without the help of Brother Gressett and other local supporters. She seemed to choose her battles wisely.

The biggest objection to Sister Washburn's Bible school related to its financing.

According to the minutes:

Brother Gressett said that they are already putting about 80% of their home mission funds into the Indian work. He also said that the financial angle of the Bible school was their biggest objection, and he mentioned the problem of support. Brother Gressett said that since the Indian work had been put into the hands of the district, they have tried to help both white and Indian works. But they are hindered by lack of sufficient funds... The district attitude is precautionary about the Bible school, but they recognize

²⁶ "Notes on Planning Meeting of June 2, 1956," Record Group 13-53, Shelf Location 22/8/6, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, 1.

²⁷ Ibid.

the need. They just don't want to get into something they can't financially handle later on.²⁸

Despite the financial obstacles, Brother Gressett and the other men assured Sister Washburn that she “did not have any grounds for discouragement.”²⁹ What is clear from the minutes is that Sister Washburn was not able to depend on the Arizona district for support; rather, she would have to raise money from supporters elsewhere through her own ingenuity and faith.

The curriculum also loomed during the planning meeting. Once the ministers made it clear that the AG was treating the Bible school as a “local” institution and a “Bible training school” rather than a Bible college, the question of the mission of the school had to be decided.³⁰ Brother Gressett raised another concern: “Indians’ minds are limited from lack of education and other handicaps.”³¹ He believed that the early curriculum should follow the model of a Sunday school course with an emphasis on basic biblical literacy and interpretation. The other ministers, in agreement, suggested the Workers Training Courses from the AG’s Sunday School Department as a model for the early curriculum.³²

At the end of the discussion, the purpose of the Bible school was set forth:

Not to be a regular Bible School, not a reciprocal school
with other Bible Schools; not to accumulate credits to be

²⁸ Ibid., 2.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ The emphasis on “Bible Training School” probably meant that the AG thought (or hoped) that Washburn’s college would follow the short-term Bible school model, rather than the ministerial training institute model.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

transferred to other schools; there is no ambition to make it a full-fledged Bible School. Many missionaries need Sunday school teachers, deacons, and helpers. The purpose of the school would be to train these people to go back and help their own missionaries and they would strongly be urged to do so.³³

The language in this statement is striking. Sister Washburn had originally envisioned a Bible school that resembled any other Bible school, yet the ministers she consulted and the AG wanted it to create helpers for the AG's current missionaries, not to create indigenous missionaries.³⁴ If American Indians wanted a full Bible college or ministerial institute certificate, they would still have to attend one of the larger AG Bible schools, such as Central Bible Institute. The kind of Bible school suggested by the white AG leadership would defeat what Sister Washburn had hoped for, that is, a place to train Indians for leadership positions. Yet Sister Washburn probably knew that the only way to further her idea with the AG was to comply with the white, male hierarchy. Her hope rested on the potential success of her Bible school. If it could build on its initial success, it might some day become what she had originally intended. Officially, however, her Bible school was to be a local institution, run as part of her All-Tribes Mission.

Once the purpose was defined and Sister Washburn promised that students of the Bible school would be encouraged to return to the reservations, the discussion turned to the school's financial needs. Five thousand dollars was required to start, and Sister Washburn had about one thousand dollars pledged from supporters.³⁵ The group charged

³³ Ibid., 3.

³⁴ Washburn, 50.

³⁵ "Notes on planning meeting," 3.

Sister Washburn with finding the rest of the money and other resources. She also identified eight interested students who were willing to enroll as the first class. One of the ministers, Brother Bruhn, expressed concern that the students would not be able to obtain sponsorship to cover their expenses.³⁶ Sister Washburn replied, “The girls could easily get housework to support themselves, and the boys, work in cotton. They would go to school in the afternoon or evening, but not in the mornings. They would eat mainly beans and potatoes.”³⁷ Sister Washburn and other local AG pastors who were willing to donate their time would serve as staff. The meeting adjourned with the committee drawing up a letter of appeal and approval to be considered by the AG’s national office.³⁸

The end of the planning meeting marked the beginning of the true challenge for Sister Washburn: how to solicit contributions. Her initial financing came from an AG congregation in Houston. Brother Gressett found that they were looking for a project to sponsor and directed them to Sister Washburn.³⁹ They contributed an initial thousand dollars even before the meeting, enough to pay for the concrete floor, plumbing and a portion of the masonry blocks.⁴⁰ With that money in hand, Sister Washburn and members of her All-Tribes congregation in Phoenix broke ground.

Sister Washburn prepared the plans for a main school building, “consist[ing] of dormitory rooms, reception room, classrooms, dining room, kitchen and utility rooms.”⁴¹

³⁶ Ibid., 4.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 5.

³⁹ Washburn, 49-50.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 50.

⁴¹ Ibid., 51.

Her husband, an expert in construction, drew the plans to scale. The men from her All-Tribes congregation, with the help of local AG pastors and parishioners, donated much of the labor.⁴² When they had exhausted the initial funds, Sister Washburn began traveling, speaking to any congregation that invited her. The second significant donation to the Bible school came from the First Assembly of God in Covina, California. They raised and sent sixteen hundred dollars.⁴³

Donations then flowed from a variety of places. The Southern California District of the Assemblies of God gave linens, beds and bedding for the dormitory. The Weatherford family arrived with a truckload of supplies, including food and a freezer. The Southern California District's Women's Ministries sent classroom equipment. An unnamed California church donated a central heating and cooling system, and a refrigerator came from the Orange County, California Women's Ministries. A Brother Bryant donated ovens, and the Scio and Clutter pottery Companies of Ohio contributed dishes and cookware. As word of Sister Washburn's Bible school spread through the various AG networks, believers in her cause sent whatever they could to support her.⁴⁴ The Indian congregants of All-Tribes contributed traditional handicrafts, including rugs, in order to give the buildings a colorful touch, and "Chief" John McPherson painted a mural on the walls of the reception room.⁴⁵

The outpouring of support strengthened Sister Washburn's resolve.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 52.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Each day as we saw the building moving towards completion, and every needed item supplied, any doubts about the project being in God's will were erased. We beheld the hand of God hovering over all the activities, and we knew He was honoring our faith. My burden to see Indians taught sound Bible doctrine was coming to fruition.⁴⁶

During the summer of 1957, Sister Washburn traveled to Indian camp meetings in Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and northern California to speak about her Bible school and to find potential students. She also employed four teachers for the first semester: all were Bible college graduates and all were willing to work for free. Those included Brother and Sister Carruthers, Sister Virginia Kridler and Sister Ruth Gardiner.⁴⁷ The All-Tribes Bible School (ATBS) opened on September 28, 1957, with thirty-two students.⁴⁸

While Sister Washburn's work for the Bible school was extraordinary, she was also following a well-established path among female Pentecostal missionaries. From the very beginning, large numbers of female Pentecostal missionaries sought to build institutions such as schools that would serve their converts. The most famous of these early missionaries was Minnie Abrams, who constructed a school—and a Pentecostal missiology—based on her experiences. According to missionary historian Dana Robert, “In Abrams's missiology, seeking the Holy Ghost and fire was not for the faint-hearted or unconsecrated, but for those truly and completely at God's disposal... Abrams thus

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Pauline Dunn, A Trail of Beauty: A Short History of the American Indian Bible College, Record group 13-17-15, shelf loc. 22/8/6. Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, 5.

interpreted Pentecostal phenomena as signs of the Spirit and empowerment for mission, within the broader context of Christian love.”⁴⁹ Roberts concluded that Abrams’s missiology was the most influential for Pentecostal women missionaries because of the emphasis on self-sacrificing love.⁵⁰

Sister Washburn exemplified the early Pentecostal female missionary figure that Abrams described. She devoted herself to her dream of an all-Indian Bible school in a manner that emphasized self-sacrifice and God’s love, and she actively sought signs and wonders and understood that she was completely at God’s disposal. Roberts underlines how common it was, during the early years of Pentecostalism, for women to found Bible schools or training institutes in order to spread the faith: “From the [beginning], women have founded and taught at many Bible institutes founded by Pentecostals to train indigenous evangelists.”⁵¹ Sister Washburn, then, was following in a long tradition of women’s leadership within Pentecostal education.⁵²

⁴⁹ Dana Robert, American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 246.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 252.

⁵² The importance of women in supporting indigenous leadership and the education of indigenous converts was not limited to Pentecostalism. In the nineteenth century, the Presbyterian Church established a mission to the Dakota Indians with women as the main evangelists. These women, like Sister Washburn, built their own ministerial training school for Dakota Christians so that they could train potential Native leaders for the Presbyterian Church. This shows that despite the limitations placed on women within evangelical denominations (nineteenth century Presbyterians did not ordain women; the AG encouraged women to become missionaries rather than pastors and did not ordain large numbers of women), the flexibility of missionary work allowed women to innovate within their denominations’ constraints. Bonnie Sue Lewis, Creating Christian Indians: Native Clergy in the Presbyterian Church (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003). The most notable Pentecostal example of a woman who founded a Bible school for the training of non-white pastors was Alice Luce and her work with Mexican and Mexican-American evangelists. Luce founded the Latin American Bible Institute in San Diego, Calif. in 1926. For more on Luce, see Everett A. Wilson and Ruth Marshall Wilson, “Alice E. Luce: A Visionary Victorian,” in

Sister Washburn, however, differed in one major way from her Pentecostal sisters. This kind of leadership among Pentecostal women was mainly limited to the first decades of the movement, in generations before male leaders tightened their control.⁵³ But Sister Washburn operated her Bible school from 1954 to 1965. She was not an early female evangelist, yet she exhibited many of the characteristics that marked the previous generation. She did have to contend with the male power structure, but she also managed to navigate around that power structure to achieve her goals. Not only did she display the self-sacrifice and emphasis on divine love that the previous generation had espoused, but she also showed typical Pentecostal pragmatism. She was, in fact, a pioneer in her field, much like the earlier generation of female foreign missionaries. Because home missions to American Indians took root several decades after Pentecostals had embraced foreign missions, it was still a young movement when Sister Washburn founded her Bible school. This may explain why Sister Washburn enjoyed more freedom than those in the more established, male-dominated wings of the AG.⁵⁴

Sister Washburn opened her Bible school with little more than force of will, charisma, and faith. Although it boasted financial supporters, she found herself left to do all of the major planning. She barnstormed from church to church, from camp meeting to

Portraits of a Generation: Early Pentecostal Leaders, eds. James R. Goff Jr. and Grant Wacker (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 159-176.

⁵³ See also Ruth Tucker, "Female Mission Strategists: A Historical and Contemporary Perspective," Missiology 15.1: 73-88.

⁵⁴ Margaret M. Poloma, The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 110.

camp meeting, throughout the American West to raise funds and to find recruits. Such work was no small task for a woman in 1950s America. Her conviction led to others to believe in her. Indeed, they were even willing to work for free, whether in the construction of the building or as teachers and maintenance staff. Fellow Pentecostals felt that Sister Washburn was truly doing God's work, and her belief in the power of the Holy Spirit gave her unshakable conviction as well as authority.

5.3 Learning Faith and Trust at All-Tribes

Life for students at the All-Tribes Bible School, although governed by faith, proved financially difficult, even though the school charged only a dollar a day, a fee that did not cover operating costs.⁵⁵ Most students came from poverty-stricken families that could not support them, and all of the students had to work while attending the Bible school.⁵⁶ Sister Washburn regarded the hardship as a test from God. The first students came from nearby southwestern tribes, but as word of All-Tribes spread, Pentecostal Indians from all around the country began to arrive. Once at the Bible school, they developed a shared experience, one that centered on poverty, faith, and the miraculous. In doing so, they came to trust each other and to appreciate their identities as Indians and Pentecostals.

Most of the early Indian students at All-Tribes traded reservation poverty for Pentecostal urban poverty. The quest for support began immediately. Male students worked in the fields outside the city or as day laborers, while female students labored as

⁵⁵ Low tuition marked Bible schools. See Brereton, Chapter 9.

⁵⁶ Washburn, 55.

cooks or housekeepers. Some lived in the dormitory, while married students, who often had children, had to find a place to live as well as a way to support their families. In order to accommodate their needs, Sister Washburn set up night classes so that the majority of her students could work during the day and study at night.⁵⁷

Sister Washburn said she believed that if God wanted something to happen, he would make it happen, and that the Lord would always take care of those who followed him. In the face of pervasive personal hardship and the poverty of the school, the students struggled to accept Sister Washburn's teachings, she said. In her autobiography she recounted a story of two such students, a married Indian couple named Juanita and Alvin. Juanita needed dental work, but they did not have enough money for the procedure. Alvin asked Sister Washburn for help, and she instructed him to pray and have faith.⁵⁸ The day of the appointment came, and Alvin had not yet found the money. Dejected, he went to Sister Washburn and began to speak of his despair, when a stranger walked through the entrance of the All-Tribe's building. Sister Washburn recalled: "I just came from Canada," the man said as he introduced himself. "I felt the Lord would have me come visit your school and give a contribution to help one of your students."⁵⁹ Sister Washburn herself was surprised at the good fortune. "Alvin and I looked at each other, remembering how we discussed that God works on His own schedule and is never late."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Washburn, 54.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

The money covered the dental bills as well as groceries and a badly needed new tire for Alvin's car.⁶¹

Because Sister Washburn was a believer in the miraculous, stories like that of Alvin and Juanita pepper her autobiography. While they function as simple Pentecostal testimonials, they can also be interpreted as parables with deeper meaning.⁶² Pentecostal Indians had to learn to trust that the Holy Spirit (often in the guise of other believers) would provide for their needs. This proved especially true for young converts who left the reservation and its traditional forms of familial/tribal support. Once converted, their family circle widened to include fellow Pentecostals, white and Indian.⁶³

Alvin and Juanita were not the only ones whose faith was tested—Sister Washburn's was too. In one newsletter to supporters, she wrote:

A cold winter in Phoenix, most unusual. Students have a siege of the mumps and flu. Hardest month to pay bills. Fewest contributions for the work. The Washer broke down. The refrigerator. The car. The record player. Had a leak in the roof and I lost my Scofield Bible. We turned the sheets and patched the blankets and added pinto beans for breakfast.⁶⁴

Poverty was a way of life for Sister Washburn's Indian students; it was also the way of life for a Pentecostal missionary. This poverty equipped the All-Tribes students for the

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² For more on the intricacies of the Pentecostal testimony and miracle story see "Testimony" in Wacker, Heaven Below.

⁶³ The few existing published testimonies of students who attended All-Tribes bolsters this point. All of them emphasize how the school, in the guise of its students, teachers and staff, acted as a substitute family for them. For more, see "Alumni Reflections" in Joseph J. Saggio and Jim Dempsey, eds., American Indian College: A Witness to the Tribes (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 2008), 353-384.

⁶⁴ Washburn, 57.

faith-based ministry work of the AG. The students and faculty experienced scarcity daily, but they also learned how to fight against desperation, have faith, and lean on each other, skills they would need in future ministry.

The interpretation of poverty as a positive force, something beneficial to the students, was very common within the Bible school experience, creating what historian Virginia Brereton calls “a culture of scarcity.”⁶⁵ Indeed, students at All-Tribes were poor not only because they were Indians, but also because they were Bible school students. The emphasis on a lack of material goods alleviated by miraculous gifts of money and support was not limited to Pentecostal Bible schools, but was a constant in the conservative Protestant Bible school experience.⁶⁶ Although Sister Washburn frequently noted in her autobiography that a lack of money plagued her, she did so with a certain amount of pride that she could run a Bible school with very limited resources. Such an attitude permeated virtually all American Bible schools: the school leaders, like Sister Washburn, were proud that they could do so much with so little.⁶⁷

Although many Native students came from working-class or poor backgrounds, most—especially those from reservations—enjoyed an extended kinship network that supported family livelihoods. So, while many Native students might have been cash-poor, most lived well within traditional subsistence economies on the reservations: they often had plenty of food from gardens, flocks of animals, and traditional methods of gathering and trading. Those that left their families to go to Bible school, however, were forced to

⁶⁵ Brereton, 132.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

adapt to a cash economy. Although no evidence exists from the period, adaptation to an urban cash-based lifestyle was probably hardest for those who came from reservations that had extensive barter and subsistence systems.

Although Pentecostals preferred to frame the gifts of money, food and support as works of the Holy Spirit, the truth is they heavily leaned upon a network of believers. The students at All-Tribes had to learn how to trust each other, work together, and depend on each other as fellow Pentecostal Indians. But these students came from a society that trusted few outsiders. Trust was usually located in the family unit and extended to the tribal unit. Sister Washburn's emphasis on faith helped Pentecostal Indians move past their distrust, not only of each other, but also of non-Indians, including Sister Washburn and her faculty. By doing so, they entered the greater AG network of believers, as well as the network of fellow Pentecostal Indians. By learning to identify with communities wider than family and tribe, they deepened not only their beliefs, but also their identities as Pentecostals and Indians.

5.4 Love Was In the Air: Matchmaking at All-Tribes

All-Tribes Bible School was more than a place of faith transformation and education; it also served as matchmaker.⁶⁸ Because the Pentecostal community on the reservation was small, Pentecostal converts often experienced trouble finding suitable mates. Pentecostal Indians preferred to marry fellow Pentecostals, ideally an Indian of the same tribe. However, many male Indian Pentecostal converts intermarried with white

⁶⁸ Many alumni affectionately referred to the school as "American Indian Bridal College." Saggio and Dempsey, 310.

Pentecostal women whom they met through Bible college or church functions, including Brothers Charlie Lee, John McPherson, and Andrew Maracle.⁶⁹ All-Tribes gave Pentecostal Indians not only a place of community and fellowship, but also a place where they could meet like-minded potential mates.

Sister Washburn had anticipated that the young, single people of ATBS would become interested in each other: “The ‘love factor’ and Cupid would be permanent residents at ATBS.”⁷⁰ Because of this, she studied the catalogues of other AG Bible schools to find precedents for rules and regulations about dating and marriage. Rules regarding dating were strict at AG Bible schools in general, and Sister Washburn’s were no exception. Students could only go off campus to date in chaperoned student groups, and couples were not allowed to be alone together on campus.⁷¹ According to Sister Washburn, the students did not find the rules onerous: “They were glad for any opportunity to spend some time together, even if that time was controlled.”⁷²

Sister Washburn took a pragmatic approach to dating. On one hand, it was often good to have a spouse who would accompany an AG missionary/evangelist, but on the other hand, it had to be the right kind of spouse. ATBS did not allow its single students to marry until after graduation. Sister Washburn and the faculty advised those who did marry as follows: “After couples became engaged, faculty members and I counseled them

⁶⁹ McPherson, Lee, and A. Maracle were all from the first generation of native Pentecostal evangelists, and all attended various Bible schools before AIC opened. They never attended a Bible school where they might meet a fellow Pentecostal Native woman.

⁷⁰ Washburn, 60.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

about the importance of placing God as the highest priority in their lives. We did not discourage them about marriage. But we tried to show them that God always has a right person and time for marriage.”⁷³ In her autobiography, Sister Washburn listed many of the single students who married each other, a list that grew as the school became bigger and gained reputation.

Marriage played a crucial role in strengthening Pentecostal Indian identity, as Sister Washburn’s willing acknowledgement of her school’s matchmaking function indicates. Students wanted to wed fellow Pentecostals because of shared beliefs and values. Marriage to a fellow Pentecostal Indian was even better, because even if they came from different tribes, they shared an understanding and experience as Indians. Finally, the school’s matchmaking allowed Pentecostal Indians to make alliances with others from their own and different tribes, thus expanding their circle within Pentecostalism. A wider familial alliance meant that one could gain more financial support as a missionary or easier entrance to a reservation that was not one’s own. The other side of this argument, however, is that Pentecostal identity became more important than tribal identity. Pentecostalism encouraged marriage outside of one’s tribe simply because it was often hard to find a suitable person within the tribe. Inter-tribal marriage often meant that one spouse would have to abandon age-old customs in order to accommodate the other person’s tribal culture.

⁷³ Ibid.

5.5 The Miracle of the Fishes and the Fry Bread

The mission of the All-Tribes Bible School faced difficulties during the first decade. Apart from economic issues, the student body became aware of deep divisions that threatened to overwhelm the similarities among them. As Indians, they shared a culture, yet their tribal differences impinged more and more. Sister Washburn, in planning an all-Indian Bible school, did not anticipate the problems that tribal differences would cause. Although no student memoirs or recollections exist from the earliest years, one issue stands out in Sister Washburn's autobiography: food. Sister Washburn's presentation of the problem of feeding her students emphasized the miraculous power of God and the Holy Spirit for her Pentecostal readership. The nuances of the autobiography, however, make clear that it was really about how Pentecostal Indians had to confront their tribal differences while also learning how to trust each other and construct their own unique Pentecostal identity.

The first students at the Bible school easily adjusted to the standard culinary fare: pinto beans, tortillas or fry bread, and chilies.⁷⁴ The Pimas and Papagos who made up the initial classes typically ate this food. So, at first, the evidence does not reveal any complaints.⁷⁵ Not only was this food local, but it was also cheap. Beans were inexpensive, chilies could be easily bought or grown, and fry bread and tortillas were easy to make with little effort and few ingredients. For these reasons, Sister Washburn

⁷⁴ Dunn, 6.

⁷⁵ Washburn, 55.

believed that she had found a way to feed her students while keeping expenses to a minimum.

Once word of All-Tribes Bible School began to spread, students came from well beyond the Southwest. The first out-of-state contingent included Mohawk converts, and they disliked the school's food. Sister Washburn recalled, "However, when the Canadian Mohawk students came and were faced with pinto beans every day, they were not happy. 'Please, Sister Washburn, we are not sorry we came to school,' they said, 'but this desert wind, it is so dry. This food—there is no fish to eat.'"⁷⁶ Sister Washburn faced a problem—how to find fish for her Mohawk students in the middle of the Arizona desert.

This request was not Sister Washburn's only dietary dilemma. When a large group of Navajo students arrived at her Bible school, they begged Sister Washburn for their traditional food. Sister Washburn now had another problem. "The Navajos were asking for mutton. How were we going to come up with a ewe or lamb? Mutton was much too expensive to buy in the market."⁷⁷ Students from a variety of Plains tribes were also unhappy over the food: they wanted wild game, while the Apache students longed for beef.⁷⁸ Sister Washburn wanted her students to be content and remain at the Bible school, so she struggled with the dilemma of how to provide their preferred foods when the budget could only afford beans and tortillas.

Sister Washburn approached the problem in a typical Pentecostal manner: she prayed to God to send them the desired provisions and she solicited her supporters,

⁷⁶ Dunn, 7.

⁷⁷ Washburn, 56.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

telling them that the school needed fish, mutton, wild game, and beef. Predictably, her supporters sent the needed food. A local minister donated lambs, too large now to keep as pets, for mutton stew; a local man donated a freezer full of fish; somebody sent forty live chickens; a beekeeper donated a truckload of honey; local hunters donated the extra deer and elk that they had shot; and another local minister brought home a deer that she had accidentally hit while driving on the highway.⁷⁹ The flow of donations helped satisfy students' craving for a change from beans and tortillas. The different foods also allowed them to share some of their tribal cultures.

Sister Washburn placed her recollections regarding the need for a variety of food at the beginning of her history of the All-Tribes Bible School. She told the story in order to give a testimony about how God answers prayers. The described need for food evoked the story of Jesus and the fishes and loaves from the Gospels. She asked and God provided. Not only did he provide, but he also sent food that would make life easier for her Indian students. For Sister Washburn, the appearance of the needed sustenance was a miracle, an answer to her prayers and those of her students, and she presented it as such.

Yet, the stories that surround the food at All-Tribes are important not only because of their miraculous content, but also because they exemplify the complexity of Sister Washburn's Bible college. This college was an all-Indian college, where Pentecostal Indians could train for the ministry in a comfortable setting. They would grow to be stronger Christians through a shared identity, both Indian and Pentecostal,

⁷⁹ Washburn, 56. Dunn, 8.

even though distinct tribal differences divided them. They were not all the same; while they had a shared background as Indians in the United States, their cultures, languages, dress, and food were all diverse. The Pentecostal literature about early days at All-Tribes rarely explored the Indian students' differences, yet the story surrounding the miracle of the food clearly shows that conflicts appeared. Sister Washburn had not counted on problems with the food, but as usual, she rose to the occasion, found a way to accommodate her students, and defused the issue. In the end, the common Pentecostal-Indian experience became stronger. The students learned that they could accept their differences as well as their similarities.

5.6 From All-Tribes to the American Indian College

For the first ten years of its operation, Sister Washburn oversaw every aspect of life at the All-Tribes Bible School. But in 1964, she suffered a broken arm in an automobile accident, followed by a freak accident in 1965 that damaged her lungs.⁸⁰ Weak and unable to continue running her Bible school with the same vigor, Sister Washburn began to look toward the future of ATBS. She had proved that Indians could be evangelists. She commented on this cherished belief, "They were taking initiative in leadership and responsibilities in the church. I was beginning to see the indigenous principle develop among them."⁸¹ Believing that the success of her Bible school would lead the AG to embrace the program, Sister Washburn began to arrange for what would happen on her departure and resigned. With her resignation in 1965, ATBS began the

⁸⁰ Washburn, 68-70.

⁸¹ Ibid., 71.

transformation from a local school run by a local church into a full-fledged AG Bible college. The AG's willingness to commit its money to support this change shows that Sister Washburn's work at ATBS had finally led the AG to realize that they needed an all-Indian Bible college.

As of her resignation, Sister Washburn felt called to go back into more practical missionary service. Meanwhile, the AG began to take steps toward bringing ATBS under their official auspices, redesigning its original operating plan so that it could become a Bible training institute. Sister Washburn was thrilled: "The vision that God gave me in 1954 for the Bible school had never dimmed, nor had I ever doubted the far-reaching potential of the Native American."⁸² She officially turned the school over to the Department of Home Missions, which set up a board composed of Arizona and Southern California District leaders to appoint a new head of ATBS. They chose Don Ramsey, a former BIA schoolteacher on the Navajo reservation and a missionary.⁸³ In 1966-1967, the AG's Southwestern Districts (composed of Arizona, New Mexico, West Texas, Rocky Mountain, Northern California-Nevada, and Southern California) formed a new board, and, with the Department of Home Missions, re-organized ATBS as a ministerial institute of the AG. The AG changed the curriculum to adhere to the standards for Bible institutes, and Brother Ramsey found a site for the newly renamed American Indian Bible

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Dunn, 10-12.

Institute (AIBI). With a major expansion in the works, the original building would no longer suffice.⁸⁴

Brother Ramsey and his wife came from Oklahoma. Unlike Sister Washburn, he was a well-educated man, having earned both a bachelor's and master's degree from Oklahoma East Central State College. Whereas Sister Washburn had run ATBS with neither training nor experience, Brother Ramsey was a career educator with plans to put AIBI on par with the AG's other Bible Institutes. He set about raising money.⁸⁵

Before AIBI became an official AG regional Bible institute, the *PE* mentioned it only once. After it gained regional status and official recognition in 1965, the *PE* took notice by covering the fundraising campaign. Although Brother Ramsey was able to sell the original site and building of the old ATBS, that move did not yield enough money to fund the new campus. As they broke ground and began construction of the new buildings in February 1968, supporters of AIBI had raised only \$45,000—just one-fifth of the projected cost of \$225,000.⁸⁶ During construction, AIBI bore the additional financial burden of renting a building for its displaced students. The AG planned to build two dormitories, a dining hall, and a classroom building, and to expand the campus further as the money came in.⁸⁷ The *PE*, meanwhile, appealed to the greater Pentecostal public for

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸⁷ Author Unknown, "New Campus Site for Indian Bible School Dedicated," *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 28 April 1968, 14.

funds, equipment, and books for a desperately needed library.⁸⁸ Money and help poured into AIBI from individuals and entire congregations, just as when Sister Washburn founded ATBS.

On October 1, 1971, with the first phase of the construction completed on the new campus located on the north side of Phoenix, the supporters of AIBI dedicated the first building. Reflecting the change from Bible school to ministerial institute, the mission of the school officially changed from educating Indians to be missionary helpers to “provid[ing] a foundation for an indigenous Indian church program.”⁸⁹ No longer would AIBI focus on training future Sunday school teachers and church workers. Now, its graduates would be missionaries and AG Indian leaders. Since its inception as ATBS, 173 students had attended the school in some capacity. Forty-one completed the three-year certificate program, seven of the graduates were heading Indian churches, two received appointments as home missionaries, and the rest were church workers.⁹⁰ With the new focus on the indigenous principle, the school intensified its efforts to train more Indian pastors and missionaries. Now, finally, the AG could begin to turn its Indian ministry into a program headed and run by Indians.

⁸⁸ Author Unknown, “Indian Bible School Planning New Campus,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 16 April 1967, 18.

⁸⁹ Author Unknown, “American Indian Bible Institute Dedicated,” The Pentecostal Evangel, 12 December 1971, 17.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

After presiding over a growing school for thirteen years,⁹¹ Brother Ramsey stepped down, making way for AIBI's first Indian president. In 1978, Simon Peter, a member of the Choctaw Nation and a World War II veteran, was appointed the new president of AIBI. Brother Peter grew up in Oklahoma and attended Chilocco Indian School and Oklahoma Presbyterian College. Like his Navajo contemporary Brother Lee, Brother Peter was well educated for his time and place, having earned a B.A. at Oklahoma State University. He served as pastor in Indian and non-Indian churches in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas and Colorado.⁹² When he took over the presidency of AIBI, the school was burdened with \$60,000 in debt as well as an urgent need for continued growth. Yet the students of AIBI were jubilant that they had an Indian president, and revival broke out.⁹³ Students and Indian leaders believed that great changes lay ahead for AIBI now that it was in the hands of one of their own. Unfortunately, their jubilation was short-lived. Soon after installation as president, Brother Peter fell ill with cancer. The entire Pentecostal Indian community joined the students in prayer for his healing, but Brother Peter worsened. Sensing that the end was near, he resigned in 1979, only one year after his appointment. On November 5, 1979, Brother Peter passed away, much to the grief of his many Indian and white supporters in the AG.⁹⁴

⁹¹ The building project of 1968-1971 could not accommodate the student body, so in 1977 ground was broken for another building complex, housing a chapel, classrooms, offices, and a library. Author Unknown, "Indian Bible School Building a New Chapel," The Pentecostal Evangel, 12 December 1971, 17.

⁹² Dunn, 25.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 28-29.

AIBI's vice president, Eugene Herd, took over the administration of the school until late in 1979 when Carl Collins, a white professor at AIBI, was selected to be president. Brother Collins was an experienced educator, missionary, and pastor who, compared to most AG pastors and leaders, was exceptionally well educated. He had earned a B.A. in Bible from Bob Jones University and an M.A. in Higher Education Administration from North Carolina's Appalachian State. He served as a pastor at AG churches in Georgia and South Carolina and taught at the University of South Carolina, Clemson University and Spartanburg Technical College. He had moved to Phoenix initially to take over the student employment program and to teach at AIBI.⁹⁵

Brother Collins inherited not only the rising debt of the school's ambitious construction project, but also factionalism and distrust. Many students lamented that the school would not stay under Indian leadership; some had also become radicalized, influenced by the racial politics of the era.⁹⁶ As AIBI grew, so did student factionalism. Some students had difficulty getting along with each other. One former AIBI student recalled: "I remember my friend saying 'I don't like my roommate. She's always longing for the ocean and the green forests. She even eats fish! I don't think she really likes Navajos either. Why doesn't she just go back to her North Country anyway?'"⁹⁷ Other students harbored anger toward non-Indians. In one incident in the dining hall, an angry young Indian man erupted: "I hate white people! They have always mistreated our people. Every treaty they ever made with us, they broke. How can I study under such

⁹⁵ Ibid., 35.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 36.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 37.

teachers?”⁹⁸ Faced with simmering tensions, Brother Collins re-emphasized that the school’s mission was not to remove the students from their Indian culture, but to provide them with a place to define themselves as Christian Indians. The faculty urged the students to retain and develop their individual tribal cultures. Brother Collins made major changes by hiring a dean of students and counselors. He helped the staff become more sensitive in dealing with the various Indian cultures and encouraged the students to meet with counselors and faculty to air their frustrations and worries. Modern psychology and cross-cultural communication had finally come to the AG.⁹⁹

In the early years of the 1980s, AIBI underwent one final transformation. The governing board voted to change its status again, this time from a ministerial training institute to a four-year Bible college. This change meant that AIBI became the American Indian Bible College (AIBC) and would offer two-year associate’s degrees in business management, secretarial science and social work and four-year bachelor’s degrees in Christian education and ministerial studies, as well as the three-year ministerial certificate already offered. In 1982, after scrutiny by the North Central Association, the AIBC became an accredited Bible college of the AG. Later that year, rising enrollment forced Brother Collins to construct more buildings, both dormitories and classroom spaces. The AG finally renamed the school the American Indian College of the Assemblies of God (AIC).¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 38.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 44-45. As of 2009, this was the name still in use.

That the AIC was of primary importance in the gradual institutionalization of the indigenous principle and the formation of Indian Pentecostal identity cannot be emphasized enough. Before its founding by Sister Washburn, no such place existed for the training of Pentecostal Indians. Academically gifted students could attend other AG Bible colleges, and many did, but the AIC gave them a place of their own, a place where they could form friendships with other Indian Pentecostals. Without trained Indian missionaries, the AG would not be able to turn its missions into indigenous churches, and without indigenous churches, the AG would likely not appeal to American Indians. Once the AG fully embraced the AIC, it used its power and influence to transform what had been a small local Bible school into an accredited Bible college in only seventeen years. But it was Sister Washburn who, back in the 1950s, prodded the AG into action. She and her supporters worked hard to make the AG face reality: without educated indigenous leadership, there would be no indigenous church. Without an indigenous church, there would be no way to proclaim the Gospel with authority in Indian communities. In the end, Pentecostal pragmatism won out—the AG wanted to find the most effective way to proclaim the Gospel. By the late 1970s, all agreed that indigenous missionaries were essential for gaining converts among the Indian tribes. Although AG officials initially opposed Sister Washburn’s vision, in the end she proved victorious.

5.7 Mesa View Assembly of God and the Indigenous Church Movement

One of Sister Washburn’s strongest Native supporters was Brother Charlie Lee, who shared with her a deep commitment to developing Indian leadership within the AG.

In his mission to the Navajos, Brother Lee had immediately impressed the AG with his innovative ideas. Resolute about applying the indigenous principle, he toiled for decades to show that Indian missions could be transformed into self-sustaining Indian churches. By the late 1970s, Brother Lee's mission had progressed to the point where it was almost fully indigenous and was ready become the first indigenous district-affiliated church. With this success Brother Lee delivered an important message to his fellow Pentecostals, both white and Indian: the indigenous principle worked, and the AG must consider how using it could change the home missions program.

In 1953, Brother Lee returned to the Navajo reservation after graduating from the Central Bible Institute in Springfield, Missouri. Once there, he reached out to Navajos in the far northwestern corner of the state while successfully battling the Navajo Tribal Council for the land he needed to build a church. His church was not the only Christian mission in the region. A quick scan of the church directory in the local newspaper, the *Farmington Times-Hustler*, shows that Lee competed with Baptist, Methodist, Christian Reformed, Mormon, and Roman Catholic missions in the Shiprock/Farmington area.¹⁰¹

We should attribute Brother Lee's enthusiasm for the indigenous principle and his strong stance against paternalism within missions in part to his Navajo background. Brother Lee grew up during a tumultuous time in Navajo history. During his 1930s childhood, the Navajo people suffered severely because of the federal government's policy of stock reduction. That is, in order to curb the over-grazing of Navajo lands, the

¹⁰¹ Author Unknown, "Church Directory," The Farmington Times-Hustler, 20 September 1946, 6.

government proposed a total reduction of all “extra” goats and horses, and a 10 percent reduction of sheep. Such measures hurt small subsistence sheep-holders more than families with large flocks raised for marketable wool and meat. Because Brother Lee came from a subsistence-level sheep-herding family, they suffered. Meanwhile, the government’s attempt to dissolve the Navajo Tribal Council in favor of the Wheeler-Howard Act, a new federally backed version of tribal government, also created deep fissures between the Navajo people and the federal government.¹⁰² During this period, the first Navajo Tribal Council chairman, and Christian Reformed missionary, Jacob C. Morgan, publicly sparred with BIA Commissioner John Collier.¹⁰³ On the reservation, the sentiment was that the federal government could not be trusted, especially in light of stock reduction. The Navajo had their own form of government in the Navajo Tribal Council and did not want the government to dictate a new form of tribal government.¹⁰⁴ Parts of the Wheeler-Howard Act were progressive—it reversed allotment and allowed

¹⁰² For an in-depth review of stock reduction and its impact, as well as the history of how the federal government tried to dissolve the Navajo Tribal Council in order to implement the Indian Reorganization Act (Wheeler-Howard Act), see Donald Parman, The Navajos and The New Deal (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). For an overview of stock reduction and its impact on the Navajo, see Peter Iverson, The Navajo Nation (London: Greenwood Press 1981). For a review of the politics of the BIA and how they affected the Navajo, see Laurence C. Kelley, The Navajo Indians and Federal Indian Policy 1900-1935 (Phoenix: University of Arizona Press, 1968). For a general view of twentieth century Navajo history, see Garrick and Roberta Bailey, A History of the Navajos: The Reservation Years (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1986).

¹⁰³ For a biased but factually correct portrait of J.C. Morgan, see Donald Parman, “J.C. Morgan: Navajo Apostle of Assimilation,” Prologue : The Journal of the National Archives 4 (Summer, 1979): 83-96.

¹⁰⁴ Historians still argue over the various reasons that Navajos voted down the Wheeler-Howard Act, but many agree that it was because Morgan successfully exploited Navajo anger toward the U.S. government and linked stock reduction to the Wheeler Howard Act. For more on the intricacies of the Wheeler-Howard Act (also called the Indian New Deal or Indian Reorganization Act) see, Francis Paul Prucha, The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 2: 965.

tribes to manage their own assets.¹⁰⁵ But the Navajos opposed it because they tied it to stock reduction, which destroyed not only their livelihood, but also the old communal way of caring for each other, in which wealthy families often kept extra animals around for their poorer neighbors. The stock reduction caused many poor Navajos to go hungry during the harsh New Mexico winters, since they depended on the extra goats and horses that the government destroyed for food.¹⁰⁶ This grim situation was compounded by the eradication of their last ditch food source, prairie dogs, which the government also destroyed as part of a New Deal public works project in the desert.¹⁰⁷ Although Brother Lee never mentions his childhood in any of the Pentecostal literature, since he came from a sheep-owning family, the events of the 1930s no doubt touched them in some form. The stock reduction campaign remains seared into the collective Navajo psyche, together with a distrust of outsiders and a special hatred for the federal government.

¹⁰⁵ Allotment, as enacted by the Dawes Act of 1887, destroyed the reservation system by breaking the traditional communal/familial way of living. It divided up reservations into plots meant to serve nuclear families (chiefly through farming) and allowed Native peoples to sell off their plots to whites if they wished after a period of time. One provision of the Wheeler-Howard Act was to stop the allotment of reservation land.

¹⁰⁶ For the argument that stock reduction reduced the Navajo from self-sufficiency to dependency, see Richard White, "Navajo Culture and Economy," in *The Roots of Dependency* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983) 236-255. The government implemented stock reduction because they believed that the Navajo lands were being overgrazed and because they wanted the Navajos to focus their attention on wool production. Later studies have shown that the government was primarily concerned with the sediment runoff caused by desert flash floods that filled the gullies and streams and eventually clogged the Hoover Dam, thus threatening the water supply for large western cities. The government blamed the over-grazing in the high deserts of Arizona and New Mexico for contributing to the sediment run-off. For this reason the government viewed the extra sheep, horses, and goats as pests. What the government did not realize was that Navajos kept the extra goats and horses as a social welfare system—if a neighbor or family member was going hungry, it was better to give them a goat or horse to slaughter than to kill a sheep, which had commercial value. Once the extra horse and goat herds diminished because of stock reduction, Navajos were often forced to eat their sheep so they would not go hungry. This cycle tended to impoverish smaller sheep-holding families, which ended up eating their wool-producing sheep, leaving them without wool or mutton to sell. Although the Navajos did not have a cash-based economy, the people were able to take care of themselves and each other thanks to their tribal subsistence system.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Lee was not the only Navajo leading a mission during this period—as mentioned above, former Navajo Tribal Chairman Jacob. C. Morgan (the Navajo leader who railed against stock reduction) led a Christian Indian congregation in the Farmington area with a satellite church in Shiprock.¹⁰⁸ Although Morgan had a long affiliation with the Christian Reformed Church, it appears that he had grown disenchanted with the denomination by the 1940s and had broken away to form an independent Navajo mission.¹⁰⁹ Though he was no longer Tribal Chairman, Morgan remained involved in fighting the federal government for proper healthcare and schools for his people. In 1946, the National American Indian Defense Association elected him vice president, in which position he continued his work as a progressive voice for Navajo rights.¹¹⁰ A foe of peyote and traditional religion,¹¹¹ Morgan stands as a non-Pentecostal example of a Navajo who had begun to build a church for his own people. The evidence does not reveal if Lee personally knew Morgan, but since Shiprock and Farmington were small towns, only separated by only thirty-five miles, he surely knew of him. Morgan seems to have been a confrontational character who gathered some detractors. Brother Lee, on the other hand, was either a quieter soul or realized that an outsized personality could create problems for missionary work. This irenic posture could explain why Brother Lee flew under the AG

¹⁰⁸ Author Unknown, “Church Directory,” The Farmington Times-Hustler, 23 May 1947, 6.

¹⁰⁹ J.C. Morgan, “Missionary J.C. Morgan Tells How He Became Engaged in Gospel Work Among His People,” The Farmington Times-Hustler, 30 May 1947, 4.

¹¹⁰ Author Unknown, “J.C. Morgan is Officer in Eastern Indian Rights Association,” The Farmington Times-Hustler, 12 April 1946, 1.

¹¹¹ J.C. Morgan, “Navajo Protests Growing Use of the Peyote Narcotic,” The Farmington Times-Hustler, 4 April 1947, supplement, no page number given.

General Council's radar for most of his career, despite his own controversial stand on indigenous churches.

The late 1940s and 1950s proved to be a time of change for the Navajo people. The *Farmington Times-Hustler* argued that the lack of an on-reservation school system was the reason that the Navajos suffered from poverty and inequality.¹¹² The newspaper also kept the spotlight on the New Mexico legislature's attempts to disenfranchise reservation Navajos.¹¹³ The editors of the newspaper publicly opposed the legislature's actions, stating, "The *Times-Hustler* has for years advocated granting full citizenship to our Navajo Indian friends and neighbors as a matter of simple American justice."¹¹⁴ Thanks to Morgan, the Farmington/Shiprock area remained a hotbed of Native leadership, both politically and within the church. The Navajo people still smarted from the pain of stock-reduction and the destruction of their traditional lifestyles. As the Navajos wrestled with issues of citizenship, equal education, and the need for healthcare, Brother Lee emerged as a leader who exemplified how Navajos could engage white bureaucracies successfully.

Religiously, the Navajos remained a mixed bag in the mid-twentieth century. Catholic, Mormon, and Methodist missions thrived in the area. The use of peyote exploded exponentially in the 1940s and 1950s. Christian and traditionalist Navajos opposed peyote religion because they saw it as "non-Navajo" and as a vector for drug

¹¹² John E. Hamilton, "Navajo Tribe Should Have Public School System on Their Reservation," The Farmington Times-Hustler, 20 September 1946, no page number given.

¹¹³ E.L. Butler and Orval Ricketts, "Legislature Attempts Disenfranchisement of Navajos," The Farmington Times-Hustler, 14 March 1949. 1.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

abuse. Although the Tribal Council made the use of peyote illegal by 1940, the peyote movement began to spread and take root among the Navajo at the same time that Lee built his indigenous church.¹¹⁵ By the year 2000, the peyote movement encompassed approximately 40,000 out of 244,000 tribal members.¹¹⁶ Approximately 9 percent of Navajos solely practiced traditional Navajo religion; the rest of the tribe was a mix of Christian groups (Catholic, Mormon, evangelical Christians and Pentecostals) and those who retained a dual religious identity (e.g., peyote believers who also belonged to a Christian church).¹¹⁷

Toiling for decades on the remote reservation, Brother Lee and his wife built a solid reputation among their fellow Indian evangelists and missionaries. Once Sister Washburn founded her Bible College, Brother Lee sent promising Navajo converts to be trained for mission work. A staunch supporter of the AIC, he felt that an all-Indian Bible school was necessary if the AG were to apply successfully the indigenous principle. He retained close ties with the AIC for the rest of his life, serving as the graduation speaker in 1968, as a featured speaker at the dedication of the new campus in 1971, and as a faculty member after his retirement from the pastorate in the 1980s.¹¹⁸ At AIC he found a willing audience for his ideas and methods, theories that would influence many young

¹¹⁵ Omar Call Stewart, Peyote Religion: A History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 296.

¹¹⁶ David B. Barrett, Greg T. Kurian and Todd M. Johnson, World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1:787.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:229

¹¹⁸ Author Unknown, "American Indian Bible Institute Graduates Largest Class," The Pentecostal Evangel, 25 August 1968, 14.

Pentecostal Indian leaders of the next generation, including AG Indian Representative and Executive Presbyter Brother John Maracle.

In September 1978, the *PE* printed a four-page story on Brother Lee and his indigenous church in Shiprock, New Mexico, with Brother Lee featured on the cover of the magazine.¹¹⁹ It took the denomination's magazine of record nearly two years to report on the church's indigenous status; during the year it was accepted by the General Council, 1976, the *PE* made no public announcement. We do not know why, but it is possible that the idea of a fully indigenous Indian church was an uncomfortable one for the AG—or at least for the editors of the *PE* at the time. In addition, the content of the article might have caused discomfort, for it gingerly addressed the problem of paternalism.

The article began with negative comments about two historic foes of American Indians, white missionaries and the BIA, and then proceeded to a statement of how an indigenous missionary could do better. The author, unnamed, faulted white missionaries for not allowing Indians to play any meaningful role in the building of their missions.

When mission work began on the various reservations, missionaries came to bring the gospel thinking in terms of “poor and illiterate” Indians. The practice that prevails with the BIA became common among most non-Indian missionaries of all denominations. They provided for both the material and spiritual needs of the Indians... Paternalism developed which reduced many Indians to charity cases. Some attended missions partly because of the material benefits they received.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ On the cover of the magazine, Brother Lee appeared in a 1970s era suit.

¹²⁰ Author Unknown, “Navajo Indian Church becomes Indigenous,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 10 September 1978, 8.

Such a statement represented a radical move by the editors of the *PE*, because they were acknowledging the problem of paternalism within missions programs, including (although indirectly) in their own. The editors of the *PE* also acknowledged that by the 1970s the indigenous principle had gained a foothold beyond the Indian missionaries who had always supported it.

Brother Lee's formula for successful evangelization, as described in the article, no longer called for building a mission and acting as an example. Instead, he engaged his potential converts. He stated, "Any missionary should acquire a thorough knowledge of the culture of the tribe that he is to serve. Through this he can gain a better understanding of the thinking and practices of the people."¹²¹ In a dramatic departure from the AG's historic outlook, he also urged missionaries to avoid denigrating traditional religion or traditional practices and stated that a strong connection to tribal culture could coexist with being a Christian. Brother Lee recommended education: "Missionaries who use correct grammar and understand Indian culture will make a better impression on better educated Navajos."¹²² Many young Indians were now educated, Brother Lee argued, and missionaries had to stay relevant with current Indian thought, including the writings of those whom the AG saw as "radical" Indian writers, historians, and philosophers. Do not ignore them, he warned, because the young people of the tribe were interested in what

¹²¹ Ibid., 9.

¹²² Ibid.

they were saying. In other words, a truly astute missionary had to stay current on all aspects of Indian culture.¹²³

Brother Lee also offered a model of how an indigenous missionary should actively involve converts in the building of the mission. The Lees encouraged tithing, and in order to show how it worked and to be accountable, they made the mission's financial records public. They trained Indians with potential to become teachers in the Sunday school or to administer other aspects of the mission. Some they sent to the AIC for training as potential pastors and evangelists. They filled every church leadership position with a Navajo. As the church grew and expanded, the people decided that they wanted more control over the mission. So, in 1973, Brother Lee surrendered his missionary appointment. Influential members of the church came together and formed a board of directors, drafted a constitution and bylaws, and decided on the pastor's salary and the operation of the church.¹²⁴

By the mid-1970s, Mesa View Assembly of God was entirely self-supporting. It no longer received donations as a mission, and had even begun to give donations to

¹²³ Ibid. Lee was probably referring to the popularity of Dee Brown's "new Indian history," *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, along with the emergence of American Indian scholar/activist Vine Deloria Jr. and his early works, including *Custer Died For Your Sins*. Lee was also certainly aware of the American Indian Movement and its leaders as well as its emphasis on traditional Native religion during this time. Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Holt Books, 2001) (reprint); Vine Deloria Jr. *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifest* (New York: Collier MacMillon, 1969). For more on AIM during the late 1960s and early 1970s, see Paul C. Smith and Robert A. Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee*, (New York: New Press, 1996). Some might think that Lee was mainly influenced by AIM, but his work on indigenous churches well predates the movement and traces back to his experiences as a Navajo as I argue in the following pages. (While I argue that AIM was not Lee's main influence, I do not deny that he and other Pentecostal Indian leaders could have drawn some inspiration from the movement.)

¹²⁴ Ibid.

further the Pentecostal Indian cause. Brother Lee showed his trust in the people of his church by turning over all of the financial decisions and paperwork to the treasurer and secretary of the church. On October 1, 1976, the Mesa View Assembly of God became the first district-affiliated indigenous church approved by the General Council.¹²⁵ Brother Lee saw his vision realized—his Shiprock mission was no longer a mission but a fully indigenous church with a Navajo pastor, a Navajo board of directors, and Navajo staff. The church proudly exemplified the indigenous principle.¹²⁶

In 1979, Mesa View Assembly of God expanded its ministry by erecting several buildings, including classrooms, a nursery and a fellowship hall.¹²⁷ Lee's congregation constructed the buildings as finances allowed so that the church could avoid any indebtedness. The men and women of the church donated the labor.¹²⁸ As Brother Lee's church grew, he continued to champion the indigenous principle among his own people, to the greater Pentecostal public, and to the AG that had yet to accept it fully. Usually in the *PE*, articles on American Indians ended with a plea for funds to help the missionaries in the home missions program. Brother Lee's example changed that. The article on his church ended as follows: "The Division of Home Missions encourages the establishing of indigenous churches as an effective means of reaching the American Indians with the

¹²⁵ The Lumbees claimed the first indigenous church in Shannon, N.C., in 1969, but the Navajos are significant because the Shiprock church ranked as the first among a federally recognized tribe. The Lumbees were heavily influenced by African American Pentecostalism because of their mixed background.

¹²⁷ Janice J. Freeland, "Indigenous Indian Church Expands its Borders," *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 21 October 1979, 20.

¹²⁷ Janice J. Freeland, "Indigenous Indian Church Expands its Borders," *The Pentecostal Evangel*, 21 October 1979, 20.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

gospel.”¹²⁹ Such a statement signaled a major change of view by the AG and the editors of the *PE*. Thirty years after Melvin Hodges at CBI had taught Brother Lee about the indigenous principle, the AG had finally embraced it within its home missions program.

Brother Lee’s drive for the indigenous principle stemmed from reasons more complicated than his classes with Melvin Hodges at CBI, his work in the missionary field, and the AG’s Pauline ideal. His experiences as a Navajo were the most important factor. The evidence suggests that Brother Lee felt so strongly about the indigenous principle not only because its realization benefited the church, but also because it protected Pentecostal Indians. If the people took control of the church, they could be shielded from white AG paternalism and develop their own religious identity. Brother Lee knew the power that white people had and how they could exert it over American Indians—he had witnessed such abuses of power when he was a boy. He also knew that indigenous leaders could seize control of their own destinies as the Navajos had done when they protested the Wheeler-Howard Act. This lesson applied even though the entity he was battling now was not the federal government, but rather the AG white hierarchy. The development of indigenous churches neutralized the power of the AG, empowering Pentecostal Indians.

5.8 Conclusion

Sister Alta Washburn and Brother Charlie Lee proved unorthodox missionaries who clearly perceived the flaws in the institution they served. They responded by acting

¹²⁹ “Navajo Church Becomes Indigenous,” 11.

first to meet the needs of the people, even if the AG hierarchy might not approve. Sister Washburn thought that in order to further the AG's missionary program to Indians, the AG needed more Indian missionaries and leaders. She believed that these future leaders had to be trained in the fundamentals of Pentecostalism such as interpretation of the Bible, leadership, and preaching. She also believed that Indian Pentecostals should be trained in their own Bible school. Despite initial opposition from fellow Pentecostal ministers, a lack of adequate funds, and the reluctance of the AG to support the project, she persevered and built her Bible school with the dogged determination of a woman with a vision. She ran the school on hope and prayer for years, until the AG finally realized that her idea was important for successfully building its home missions program among Indians and officially took over the school. Without Sister Washburn's determination to do what she believed was right, the American Indian College of the Assemblies of God would never have existed.

When Charlie Lee returned to the Shiprock region of his youth, he determined to build an indigenous church among his own people. Influenced by Latin American missiologist Melvin Hodges and by his own experiences as a Navajo, Brother Lee set out to change how the AG approached Christian missions among Indians. Aware of the injustices of the past and the mistakes of other Christian missionaries, Brother Lee took a different approach. He involved the people of the church in every decision, and gave them responsibility for and pride in their church—literally building a church of the people. At the time that Brother Lee was transforming his mission into a church, the AG still had not made the move toward making the indigenous principle an official part of its

home missions program for Indians. Leading by example, Brother Lee persuaded the AG to see that Indian Pentecostals could indeed run their own church and run it successfully. The indigenous principle could be applied to home missions for Indians, and this change empowered Pentecostal Indians and made them more secure in their dual identities.

Although their work appeared similar, Sister Washburn and Brother Lee drew inspiration from very different personal histories. Sister Washburn's restorationist beliefs and pragmatic orientation motivated her work—God told her to build a Bible college, but he left the particulars to her. Her work was rooted in the accomplishments of the Pentecostal female missionaries of the past: innovation in the face of stasis and leadership in empowering indigenous converts. Brother Lee's experience as a Navajo convinced him that Indians must lead their own churches so that they could control their own religious fate. Knowing from his own experience that non-Indians abused power when dealing with Indians, Brother Lee sought to wrest control from the white AG leadership and give it back to his fellow Pentecostal Indians. By establishing indigenous churches, he hoped that Pentecostal Indians would find a way to embrace their new, hybrid identity.

The efforts of Sister Washburn and Brother Lee ultimately encouraged the AG to change. Sister Washburn and Brother Lee showed there was a better way to approach home missions, a way that helped neutralize the problems of paternalism and ethnocentrism. With empowerment and education came Pentecostal Indian pride and a deeper sense of identity. With a sense of identity and pride came leadership and willingness to confront the system. With the indigenous principle in place, and with their own Bible College established, Pentecostal Indians were lacking only one thing:

institutional recognition within the General Council. They still did not possess a leader, someone who could speak for them as Pentecostal Indians in the AG bureaucracy. As the 1970s drew to an end, the demand for representation on the General Council was the last major fight that the first generation of Indian missionaries, leaders, and supporters would wage.

6. Chapter 5: The Fight for National Representation: The Development of the Indian Representative Position and the Native American Fellowship

On December 2, 1977, T.E. Gannon, the National Director of Home Missions, sent Cherokee evangelist Brother John McPherson an important letter. It read in part:

You will recall that the General Council in session in Oklahoma City adopted a resolution authorizing the Executive Presbytery to appoint one to serve as an Indian representative. Unfortunately the resolution was so brief that little or no guidelines were given as to area of responsibility and no provision was made to fund this office. It was the unanimous decision of both the Home Missions Board and the Executive Presbytery that we should appoint someone to assume this position on a part-time basis... I am indeed happy, Brother McPherson, that the Executive Presbytery in session unanimously selected you to serve in this capacity.¹

Brother Gannon ended by asking for Brother McPherson's prayerful consideration of the offer of the position of Indian Representative. Shortly after receiving the letter, Brother McPherson responded to Brother Gannon, writing, "I am overwhelmed and deeply grateful to the Executive brethren for the confidence they have placed in me in regard to my serving in this capacity."² He closed by indicating that he would visit Springfield, Missouri after the Christmas season to discuss the position with Brother Gannon and the

¹ T.E. Gannon to John McPherson, 2 December 1977, filed under "John McPherson: American Indian Representative," Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

² John McPherson to T.E. Gannon, 15 December 1977, filed under "John McPherson: American Indian Representative," Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

personnel of the Home Missions Department.³ Brother McPherson's appointment to serve as the first National Indian Representative for the AG gave him and other American Indian Pentecostal leaders hope that the AG was finally embracing its Pentecostal Indian constituency. But at the beginning, the position lacked tangible power and did not bring immediate changes to the AG's approach to home missions.

Indian missionaries and evangelists worked for decades to achieve greater influence over the AG's home missions program to American Indians. During the 1950s and 1960s, the small circle of Pentecostal Indian leaders began to expand and exert more power within Home Missions.⁴ Sister Alta Washburn and the AIC, along with Brother Charlie Lee's work for the indigenization of Native churches, were major factors in changing how the AG perceived evangelism among American Indians. By building their own Bible school and cultivating a distinct Native leadership among AG missionaries and evangelists, Indian Pentecostals challenged white leaders to realize the indigenous principle. They next focused on achieving institutional leadership in the appointment of a national Indian representative. Native leaders wanted the appointee to work with the Department of Home Missions in order to deal directly with the needs of Indian congregations. In 1977, the General Council approved the position at its annual meeting, and the Home Missions Board and Executive Presbytery sent John McPherson that letter.

Problems plagued the position from the outset. As the letter Brother McPherson received clearly stated, the position of Indian Representative had no clear responsibilities

³ Ibid.

⁴ Throughout this chapter, when "Home Missions" is capitalized, it refers to the Department of Home Missions. When uncapitalized, it refers to "home missions" in general.

or funding, and it called for a part-time appointment. When Brother McPherson accepted the position, he had to contend with these problems as he attempted to make the job of Indian Representative address the needs of Indian believers. The struggle over the definition of the position of Indian Representative indicated Indian Pentecostals' efforts to gain more control over their place within the AG. The decades of the 1950s to the 1970s had been a time of hard work that brought quiet change for Indian Pentecostals and their white supporters within the Home Missions Department. But from the late 1970s to the end of the twentieth century, Indian leaders and congregations struggled more overtly against the white leadership in Springfield to carve out their own space.

This chapter will concentrate on the final decades of the twentieth century and how the Native leadership within the AG tried to define itself and gain more autonomy. While the Home Missions Department and the power structure of the AG greatly hindered Indian efforts to expand official leadership roles, Indian leaders stuck to the ideals of the indigenous principle and continued to demand a fair hearing. When the National Indian Representative idea did not work out, they innovated. The result was the creation of ethnic fellowships, in which Native leaders carved out their own autonomous space within the AG. The decades-long battle that Indian leaders waged for more say in the running of Home Missions might have disillusioned others who were less sure of their identities, but Indian Pentecostals never wavered in their faith. They refused to give up on the indigenous principle and, as this final chapter shows, made the fight for its realization the very core of their Pentecostal Indian identity. They were both Pentecostals and

Indians, and they were determined to make changes in the denomination they called their spiritual home.

This chapter will first examine the creation of the position of Indian Representative and the ways in which its first holder, Brother John McPherson, fought to define and give power to the job. The section will include comparisons with contemporary examples of minority representation within religious bodies: Indian activist Vine Deloria's work for indigenous leadership within the Episcopal Church and the development of Latino and African American ministries within the AG.. The next part of this chapter will look at the Indian struggle in 1989-2006 for more power in the Home Missions Department and the failed attempt to create a separate Native American Department under the Home Missions/Special Ministries umbrella. Finally, this chapter explores the recent Native American Fellowship within the AG and how its composition, both democratic and separate from Home Missions and Special Ministries, has given Native leaders hope for change.

6.1 The Early Fight for Leadership

The December 1977 appointment of McPherson resulted from a resolution that American Indian leaders had drawn up in March of that year for consideration by the General Council. But long before that, in 1955, Indian leaders had requested that the General Council select a national Indian Representative to speak for their interests, and

continued to do so as missions to American Indians expanded.⁵ By 1977, bolstered by the success of the AIC and Lee's church, Indian leaders believed the time was right to demand representation. The resolution, signed by thirty-three Indian leaders and white supporters, pointed out that the American Indian field held the largest number of missionaries in the Special Ministries Division of Home Missions.⁶ It also noted that the Indian field was larger than some AG districts and supported 199 Indian missionary posts, but that evangelization occurred among only a fraction of the American Indian population. The letter emphasized the need for Native leadership and indigenous churches.⁷ Finally, the resolution ended by stating:

Whereas, All of the Special Ministries in the Division of Home Missions have representation and promotion on the national level, be it therefore, Resolved that a person with Indian Ministries experience, and preferably one who is an American Indian, according to Federal definition, be appointed by the Executive Presbytery to serve as a Field Representative to the American Indian Field by January 1978.⁸

All of the other sections within AG Special Ministries (Deaf, Gypsies, Jews, and Latino) enjoyed national representation, while the American Indians did not, despite having the largest number of appointed missionaries and their own thriving Bible College.

The Home Missions Board reviewed the resolution,. The main problem, they noted in their records, was that the resolution had no provision for funding. Home

⁵John Maracle, Phone Interview, 1 August 2007. (I searched the General Council Minutes of that year without success.)

⁶ Resolution sent to T.E. Gannon, undated, filed under "John McPherson: American Indian Representative," Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Missions calculated that it would take \$35,000-40,000 to pay for the Indian Representative position, yet the AG was not willing to divert money from other projects.⁹ The Home Missions Board also stated that the Indian Representative needed to be someone who would not only work well with the missionaries in the field but also with the AG administration.¹⁰ After some consideration, the Home Missions Board decided it would recommend the following to the Executive Board: “A field representative for the Indian missionary work [who will] not be a full-time person but one who would serve as a liaison in Indian Ministries and maintain an Indian mission station as a basis of his work.”¹¹ In other words, the job became a part-time position with no funding, held in conjunction with a regular home mission appointment.

According to their records, the Home Missions Committee expected the Indian Representative to care for his own mission station or parish, as well as spend up to one-fourth of his time in Springfield on administrative duties, while continuing to evangelize and raise money to cover the expenses of the office.¹² The amount of work was tremendous and made the job problematic because it did not allow the Indian Representative to concentrate on any one aspect of the position. Besides those requirements, the Home Missions Board left the job description vague—they offered no statement regarding the Indian Representative’s duties.

⁹ Confidential Memo, 15-16 September, 1977, filed under “John McPherson: American Indian Representative,” Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Home Missions Administrative Committee Memo, 11 November 1977, filed under “John McPherson: American Indian Representative,” Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

The Home Missions Board faced another problem—they had to determine the guidelines for appointment. The Board decided to adopt a resolution that the Indian Representative be “Indian according to the Government definition of an Indian.”¹³ This statement removed from them the responsibility of defining what “Indian” meant, but it also excluded prominent leaders from the Lumbee tribe of North Carolina, where the AG was especially active, because the federal government did not recognize Lumbees as a tribe. The board suggested several prominent Indian leaders, among them John McPherson, Rodger Cree, Charlie Lee, John Maracle, and Simon Peter.¹⁴ The committee settled on Brother McPherson.

Some members of the AG leadership expressed doubts about having an Indian serve as Indian Representative. Brother Tommy Crider, the presbyter of the Northwest section of New Mexico, was one of the most vocal critics. In a letter to T.E. Gannon, Brother Crider voiced strong reservations about the Indian Representative position. He argued that more thought should have gone into the resolution. He highlighted some of his concerns, which he said were shared by white pastors and missionaries in his region:

The feeling from them seems to be, that this is needed but that it was aimed against the white missionary. Some of the Indian pastors and missionaries have indicated that the white missionaries are not making the Indian churches indigenous as soon as they can. However most of the white missionaries have this as their goal. It is taking time.¹⁵

¹³ Memorandum to T.E. Gannon, Re: American Indian Representative, 7 December 1977, filed under “John McPherson: American Indian Representative” Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Tommy Crider to T.E. Gannon, 25 October 1977, filed under “John McPherson: American Indian Representative,” Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

Brother Crider was probably talking about Brother Charlie Lee and his vocal support for the indigenization of the Indian churches. Brother Lee's church, Mesa View Assembly of God, was located in Brother Crider's district. Brother Crider also stated that he did not believe that the Indians in his area (and by implication other Indian mission stations within the AG) showed enough responsibility to run their own churches, adding, "Sure it works in foreign lands, but they don't have some of the legal hassle we have in the States."¹⁶ What exactly the legal hassle was, Brother Crider never explained.

Brother Crider ended his letter by stating, "My feeling is that it would be much better for this man to be Anglo. There seems to be more competition, rivalry, and mistrust among tribes than against the Anglo."¹⁷ He illustrated this point by explaining how Navajos only attended the local Indian camp meetings, while Indians from other tribes often attended the white camp meetings because they did not want to be associated with Navajos.¹⁸ While Brother Crider based his reasoning on the divisions that he observed among the American Indian Pentecostals in his region, he also clearly suspected Native pastors' power and ability. He was probably correct in pointing out that some tribes harbored animosities toward each other that ran deeper than their Pentecostal commonalities, but Charlie Lee's work with the Navajos refuted his views that Natives were incapable of running their own churches. In Brother Crider's own district, Brother Lee had managed to create what so many white missionaries had believed was impossible: an indigenous church. It is also likely that Brother Crider viewed Brother Lee

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

and his flock as somewhat radical, especially since Lee had gained a reputation for preaching in Navajo and championing Indian self-determination.¹⁹ In short, Brother Lee's desire for indigenous churches and an American Indian leadership within the AG threatened the roles of the white missionaries. Brother Crider's attempt to make the Indian Representative an Anglo shows that he believed that white AG leaders still knew what was best for their Indian flock. In other words, Brother Crider championed a continuation of a paternalistic power structure that seemed to keep the home missions movement safe from "radicals" such as Charlie Lee.

While the Home Missions Board noted Brother Crider's letter and mentioned it in the memorandum, the Committee maintained that it would be best to appoint a Representative who was Indian by federal definition and also amenable to the white AG leadership.²⁰ John McPherson, the mixed-blood Cherokee known for wearing a magnificent Plains Indian headdress and for his folksy style of evangelism, seemed to them to fit the bill.

6.2 McPherson's Early Years as Indian Representative, 1979-1980

Brother McPherson accepted the position in 1978 and immediately discovered that its vague description meant that he had to create a position out of nothing.

Correspondence between T.E. Gannon and Brother McPherson shows that the Home Missions Committee and General Council left it to them to define the job with little

¹⁹ Turning Point with David Manse, *The Charlie Lee Story*, 1976, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

²⁰ Memorandum to T.E. Gannon, Re: American Indian Representative, 7 December 1977, filed under "John McPherson: American Indian Representative," Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

guidance. The correspondence also reveals that the position lacked power or influence—in other words, it appears that white leaders in Springfield created it to quiet the demands of Indian leaders. The evidence suggests that in Brother McPherson, the white leadership in Springfield hoped to have a cooperative Indian leader who would not fight them. From the outset of his work however, the AG's lack of institutional support trapped Brother McPherson between the white hierarchy and the wants and needs of Indian Pentecostals. Brother McPherson strove to serve amid conflicting demands, yet he quickly found himself in an impossible situation.

In a letter to Brother Gannon dated March 21, 1978, Brother McPherson asked a series of basic questions, including why the position was only part-time.²¹ That fact had drawn the ire of some of the Indian leaders, and Brother McPherson wanted the official explanation. Brother Gannon replied that the appointment was part-time because of a lack of funding and because the Indians' resolution had not called for a full-time appointment.²² Even more revealing, he stated, "Since the bylaws places [sic] the full responsibility of administration and supervision of all special ministries work upon the district wherein it resides, this dictates to the program a certain degree of limitation."²³ In other words, the Indian Ministries within Home Missions remained under the jurisdiction of each district, so though the Indian Representative could mediate and influence the home missions, he exercised no real power over how those programs would be run.

²¹ John McPherson to T.E. Gannon, 21 March 1978, filed under "John McPherson: American Indian Representative," Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

²² T.E. Gannon to John McPherson, 5 April 1978, filed under "John McPherson: American Indian Representative," Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

²³ Ibid.

Brother McPherson could act as a mediator between the Indian leadership and Home Missions, but in reality, he had no direct control over Indian Ministries. Brother Gannon tried to make this arrangement more palatable by pointing out that the Gypsy Ministries had only a part-time representative, much in the manner of the new Indian Representative, and that the Jewish ministry did not have a representative at all. In other words, the Indian Ministries should accept what they were given.²⁴

The lack of funding became an immediate problem for Brother McPherson.²⁵ In his first report of the National Indian Representative to Home Missions, he emphasized his frustration with the structure of the position, particularly since he was already committed to a full revival schedule before he accepted the job. Brother McPherson argued that he could not cancel his planned appearances: “It would be a breach of ministerial ethics and violate a practice I have endeavored to follow for many years.”²⁶ He also noted, “there were difficult obstacles in the way that would hinder in the realization of the objectives that our Indian brethren no doubt had in mind when they submitted the resolution that gave birth to the mentioned portfolio.”²⁷ Besides the lack of funding, he pointed out that some of the “difficult obstacles” included the job description,

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ For the period between April 1, 1977 and March 31, 1979, the budget for Home Missions was \$3,956,652 and the budget for Foreign Missions was \$32,692,473. The National Indian Representative did not remain unfunded because of a lack of money—it remained unfunded because the AG did not want to shift money from its other endeavors. The Audit Report, April 1, 1977 to March 31, 1979, Minutes of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Mo., 8-9.

²⁶ Report of National Representative/American Indian, 18 September 1978, filed under “John McPherson: American Indian Representative,” Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, 1.

²⁷ Ibid.

which was “vague and nebulous at best,”²⁸ and the job’s part-time status. Brother McPherson told the committee, “Of course it would be an exercise in futility to think that one person could visit a great number of stations in thirteen weeks especially with their geography being what it is and my attempt at staying on the field.”²⁹ From the information in Brother McPherson’s memo, it was clear that he already knew what it would take to make the Indian Representative into a functional position. The job as currently constructed was hopelessly untenable. But to his credit, Brother McPherson seemed optimistic; indeed, his generally sunny and willing personality probably explains why the AG initially selected him. Brother McPherson gamely attempted to make the best of a difficult situation.

Brother McPherson began his labors with a letter-writing campaign, which he hoped would raise funds.³⁰ He did this with the encouragement of T.E. Gannon, but the letter-writing campaign provoked a new problem. Many of his potential supporters pledged funds, but they also wanted him to preach at a Sunday service.³¹ Brother McPherson did not have time to preach Sunday sermons in addition to his pre-existing evangelistic campaign commitments. He implored Brother Gannon to think prayerfully about a way to help him with this problem.³²

Traveling among Indian Pentecostals, Brother McPherson encountered a multitude of questions. American Indian missionaries pointed out that they did not have

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 2.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

enough input on AG policies and that they needed better vehicles and financial support. The leadership at the AIC asked Brother McPherson what to do about Pentecostal students who, after graduating, established independent, non-AG churches on the reservations.³³ With so nebulous a job description, Brother McPherson struggled to be of service to his constituency.

Brother McPherson asked Brother Gannon for help in defining the job while he formulated a plan for dealing with the rigors of his new position. His plan, he informed Brother Gannon, was to write notes of support to all appointed Indian missionaries, contact all AG Bible colleges to let them know of his availability as a speaker, and start a small newsletter in which he hoped to publish news that pertained to Indian Pentecostals and those who lived and worked among them.³⁴ Although overwhelmed, Brother McPherson understood that he needed to continue to be out listening to the people too. In the closing sentences, he wrote:

I trust that soon certain obstacles can be removed or modified that will facilitate the office of national Rep and that it will contribute to the advancement of the kingdom and that our effort together will find its expression in many new works being established and many Indians being saved.³⁵

This statement forced Brother Gannon to confront the real reason that the AG needed to clarify and support the position of Indian Representative: the white establishment's

³³ Ibid., 3-4.

³⁴ Ibid., 5.

³⁵ Ibid., 6.

weakening of the Indian Representative position did more than keep Indians out of power—it kept souls from being saved.

Brother McPherson's guarded warning at the end of his letter to Brother Gannon was not the only indication of his feelings about the job. While he was dealing with an uncooperative leadership in Springfield, Indian leaders and constituents were complaining about Brother McPherson's ability. In a copy of a speech, apparently prepared for a mostly Indian audience,³⁶ Brother McPherson tried to clarify his views about his appointment.

I refuse to participate in a program that would make the job of Indian Rep. a placebo or a straw man, I have been a Revivalist and Children's Evangelist for 25 years and it is not unprecedented for a new job or portfolio to go to waste in a ministry or reduce him to "a null and void" status... If I am going to serve in this capacity I want to be of help. If not, then I'm gone.³⁷

The wording suggests that Brother McPherson must have faced harsh criticism that he was nothing but a puppet for the white leadership in Springfield. Brother McPherson also identified the greatest obstacle to his work as Indian Representative: "It is an exercise in futility to think that one man or person could cover so vast a field of U.S.A. where dwells the Indian population."³⁸ Apparently criticized by some for his inability to travel freely for the job, Brother McPherson added, "I know that you would like to have a visit from

³⁶ Brother McPherson's talking points are undated and lay among a jumble of his papers that had not yet been cataloged by the AG archives. However, even though we do not know where or when this forum or speech took place, the existence of these talking points indicates that there were grumblings in Indian Pentecostal ranks.

³⁷ Position Statement/Nat. Rep. (Indian), Undated, filed under "John McPherson: American Indian Representative," Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, 1.

³⁸ Ibid.

your Rep. and that's a justifiable and legitimate desire and I am apologizing for my 'no show.' However I appeal to you beloved friends to show patience in this regard."³⁹ He went on to reassure the audience that he would work out some way to travel more freely; he also told them of his plans to be in contact with Indian leaders as he worked on defining the responsibilities of the job. Brother McPherson ended this short talk with a plea for cooperation among the Indian leaders and laity, using colloquialisms to express charges that likely were leveled against him. "I am not an apple (red on the outside and white on the inside). Neither am I an Uncle Tomahawk."⁴⁰ He wanted to state clearly that he stood in solidarity with the Indian leadership as well as with the laity.

The AG structured Brother McPherson's position in a manner that made it nearly impossible for him to initiate change. With no funding and only part-time status, Brother McPherson could not even begin to address the needs of Pentecostal American Indians. And unfairly, these Pentecostal Indians began to criticize Brother McPherson as not being willing to initiate the changes they wanted. Some Indian leaders believed that Springfield was deliberately putting obstacles in the way of Brother McPherson; others saw Brother McPherson as too sympathetic to the white AG leadership. The structure of the job as well as the power struggles between whites and Indians left Brother McPherson in an unenviable position: caught between two different factions.

The criticism regarding the vague job description for the Indian Representative forced the Home Missions office in 1979 to create a formal job description. This

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

description amended the existing resolution concerning the Indian Representative. While the nature of the job did not change and funding was still not forthcoming, the amendment did clarify the duties of the position. These included encouraging the growth of indigenous churches, acting as a resource for special ministries, developing promotional material for Indian missions, assessing the needs of Indian missionaries, developing missionary curricula, traveling on the Indian camp-meeting circuit and raising additional funds for special projects.⁴¹ The amendment concluded by stating a specific goal: “It is envisioned that the main responsibility is to assess and strengthen each district Indian missions program, thus developing a strong, viable ministry under the supervision of the district.”⁴² Brother McPherson finally possessed a detailed job description given to him by the members of the General Council.

Soon after this clarification, Brother McPherson set off for the Indian Institute, a colloquy of leaders and missionaries in the Indian field.⁴³ Afterward, he reported to T.E. Gannon with a list of “critical issues,” some of which had been problems in AG missionary work among Indians for decades. The AG had tightened the education standards for missionaries, demanding that all missionaries have at least a three-year Bible institute degree. Brother McPherson pointed out that the stricter rules concerning the education and training of appointed home missionaries meant that some Indian

⁴¹ Indian Representative Job Description, August 1979, filed under “John McPherson: American Indian Representative,” Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ The letters do not reveal where the colloquy was held or when.

evangelists were having a hard time securing appointments.⁴⁴ He also stressed that many Indian churches, while thriving, were not yet ready to become indigenous and that some of the reservations “may soon be closed.”⁴⁵ Although he did not elaborate on this, he probably meant that tribal governing bodies on certain reservations were making it harder for missionaries to set up new missions. Brother McPherson also suggested that the AG put more emphasis on using the AIC to funnel pastors and missionaries toward Indian work.⁴⁶ Not only would the AIC serve the AG best as a training ground for more indigenous clergy, but, if utilized properly, it would “interject the stimulus that will cause the student to desire a ministry among their own people.”⁴⁷

While all the aforementioned problems contributed to the small number of Indians going into the ministry, Brother McPherson pointed to lack of support from the general AG constituency as the number one problem facing Indian home missionaries.⁴⁸ Without enough funding, Native ministries remained undeveloped. It was the same problem that Brother McPherson faced in his own job: if forced to travel around seeking money, how could missionaries focus on their evangelistic work? AG missionaries prided themselves on their willingness to go out on faith missions, sacrificing their own financial security in order to do missionary work. Yet raising funds was harder for Indian missionaries and

⁴⁴ John McPherson to T.E. Gannon, 18 December 1979, filed under “John McPherson: American Indian Representative,” Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, 1.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

evangelists, since their constituency was poorer than the average American.⁴⁹ This forced them to turn to the *PE* as well as to the generosity of white supporters, but with their Native parishioners unable to donate money to their cause, Native missionaries were at a distinct disadvantage.

Finally, Brother McPherson added, “Some concern was voiced about the age-old rift that has existed between Anglo missionaries and Indian workers. We all know it exists—we know what causes it, but we desire to see it end so that all of us with one mighty voice be unified in this great effort.”⁵⁰ Although reports in *PE* had long hinted that a rift had existed between white missionaries and their Indian colleagues, this was the first and only direct acknowledgement of the problem. Brother McPherson mentioned it only briefly, but that he brought it up at all it is telling. Because Pentecostal missionaries came from the lower- and working-class segments of American society (like many American Indians) the “rift” probably stemmed mostly from ethnicity rather than class. One might think that someone had directly addressed this problem by 1979, yet it seems that both white and Indian missionaries had chosen to ignore it. Resentment of white missionaries on the reservation had long festered in the Indian community, and that resentment could have come about in several ways. Some Indian missionaries saw their white counterparts as paternalistic, while others saw them as having good intentions but

⁴⁹2000 Census figures show that a higher proportion of American Indians than of the total U.S. population live in poverty. Overall, about 30 percent of American Indians live in poverty, with the Sioux, Apache, and Navajo tribes having the highest percentages (32) and the Creek, Cherokee, and Lumbee having the lowest (18). The average median income earning for American Indian adults \$28,900 for men and \$22,000 for women. U.S. Census Bureau, We the People: American Indians and Alaska Natives in the United States (Washington, D.C.: Dept. of Commerce, 2000), 11-12.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

not enough knowledge of Indian culture to be effective evangelists. Other Indian leaders wondered why they did not receive more power over their own affairs on the missionary field and chafed at being under a white district superintendent's gaze. The sources do not reveal the actual feelings of Indian missionaries. No one made their views public (with the exception of Charlie Lee, and even he mentioned the problem only in passing).⁵¹ They did, after all, have to get along with their white colleagues, and Pentecostal culture did not encourage confrontational tactics.

Brother Gannon's response to Brother McPherson's letter was swift and circumspect. He did not directly address Brother McPherson's comment on the "rift" but noted that "In some ways, I find myself a bit frustrated, and the frustration is not altogether bad... I have a great sense of joy in the progress we have made in the last few years. Not all of our Indian missionaries are continuing to be defensive and many of them have upgraded their own ministry, for which they should be commended."⁵² Again, like Brother McPherson, T.E. Gannon is vague about what he means by "defensive" and does not elaborate on the problems between white and Indian missionaries. He implies that working with certain Indian missionaries difficult, but again, he is unspecific. Yet this letter, like that of Brother McPherson's, confirms that even as late as the 1970s, white and Indian missionaries to American Indians experienced some tensions.

Brother Gannon defended the new requirements for home missionaries, arguing that they "have automatically brought into existence far better qualified personnel than

⁵¹ Turning Point, 4.

⁵² T.E. Gannon to John McPherson, 28 December 1979, filed under "John McPherson: American Indian Representative," Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, 1.

we had for a long time.”⁵³ He amended that statement by noting, “This is not to belittle nor to reflect upon those faithful workers who have served so diligently for many years. In fact, I do not know how much of Indian work we would have had if it has not been for many of the ‘less qualified’ workers who blazed the trail.”⁵⁴ Brother Gannon recognized that early white evangelists, many of whom did not possess a Bible college education, carried out substantial missionary work to American Indians. He defended the AG’s change to the stricter standards for appointment, arguing that the new standards would address some of the problems that Brother McPherson had mentioned.

In other respects, Brother Gannon proved sympathetic to Brother McPherson’s overwhelming problems as Indian Representative. In order to facilitate the “continuity” and “unification” that Indian missions lacked, he proposed an Indian committee so that they could contribute “a broad field of wisdom and understanding which can give balance to any program.”⁵⁵ He went on, “I could envision such a committee consisting of Indian ministers, Indian missionaries, and perhaps one or two district officials who have outstanding Indian works within their districts.... These, together with our Indian Representative, the national director of Home Missions and our special ministries representative could sit down together and review the things you have spoken of in your letter.”⁵⁶ Such a committee, as envisioned by Brother Gannon, would ease Brother McPherson’s burden and counsel him on important decisions concerning the Indian

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 2

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Pentecostal community. The letter closes with an offer to propose the idea of an Indian committee to the Executive Presbytery via the Home Missions Board, if Brother McPherson agreed.⁵⁷

Brother McPherson's response is lost, but it must have been positive. On January 29, 1980, Paul Markstrom, a white missionary, sent a memo to Brother Gannon with a list of Indian and white missionaries recommended for the National Indian Committee. The AG approved the committee to "serve in a consultative capacity" by March 10, 1980. Correspondence between Brother Gannon and Brother Lee hints at Brother Lee's approval to serve on the committee in an advisory manner.⁵⁸

The AG's refusal to provide funding and tangible power for Indian leaders was not the first instance of a major denomination downplaying its Indian congregants' calls to be included in the running of their own churches. About a decade before the creation of the AG's Indian Representative position, a similar drama played out in a Protestant mainline denomination. As the 1960s came to a close and the Red Power movement began to gain momentum in Indian country, Native activist and writer Vine Deloria Jr. laid out his idea for the creation of a national Indian Christian Church. Deloria believed that the mainline Protestant denominations should join to foster this national Indian church, which would be run wholly by Indian people themselves.⁵⁹ While Deloria did not include Pentecostal Christianity in his vision of a national Indian church, it is informative

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ T.E. Gannon to Charlie Lee, 8 April 1980, filed under "John McPherson: American Indian Representative," Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

⁵⁹ Vine Deloria Jr., Custer Died For Your Sins. (New York: Avon Books, 1969) 127, 125.

to look at how the mostly white mainline denominations (chiefly the Protestant Episcopal Church) dealt with Deloria's call to arms.

According to historian David Daily, during this period the Episcopal Church was trying to find meaningful ways to engage the urban poor and began to pour millions into urban ministries.⁶⁰ This development gave Deloria hope. In 1968, the Episcopal leadership elected him to the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church.⁶¹ There, Deloria proposed that the Episcopal Church establish an "Indian Desk," a national advisory committee consisting of Indian leaders, and called for the recruitment of Native clergy as well as increased Indian representation on major Episcopal committees.⁶² At first, it seemed that the Episcopal leadership reacted positively to Deloria's request by establishing and funding a National Committee on Indian Work and by offering development grants to Indian churches.⁶³ But Episcopal leaders quickly sabotaged Deloria's ideas. They sent a mole to Deloria's meetings who dispatched secret reports expressing doubts that Indians could run their own churches and warned that Indians did not have enough training or knowledge to move beyond the missions level.⁶⁴ With that, support for Deloria's ideas began to wane. The church fired white supporters of Deloria and seasoned missionary personnel to make room for new "ideas" people, and Deloria, aware that his proposal was in trouble, grew bitterly disillusioned. He resigned from the

⁶⁰ David Daily, "Vine Deloria's Challenge to the Episcopal Church, 1968-1974," presented at the American Society of Church History, Washington, D.C., 5 Jan 2008, 3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

Executive Council and stated, “At any rate I can’t see staying in the church and struggling for years to get the church to act while the rest of the Indian world marches on beyond Christianity.”⁶⁵ Between 1969 and 1974, the Episcopal Church quietly phased out its National Council of Indian Workers by refusing to fund it.⁶⁶ It stalled out, and the Episcopal Church tried to forget that the incident ever took place. Deloria never directly engaged Christianity again, except to write scathing critiques of it.⁶⁷

Deloria’s attempted engagement with the Episcopal Church is important to this study for several reasons. First, it shows that the AG was not alone in its reluctance to hand over power to Indians. In the case of the AG, however, the Indian leadership was large and well organized, which allowed them to continue to seek different avenues to national representation. Second, Deloria’s work with the Episcopal Church shows the climate of the time. By the end of the 1970s, when AG Indians made a concerted bid for national power and leadership, the Red Power movement had imploded, but the ideals that drove it lingered on many reservations. While I have found no hard evidence that the Red Power movement included any AG Indian leaders, there is no doubt that they were aware of it. Stationed mainly on the remote western reservations, AG Indian leaders likely witnessed how Red Power militancy swept up their young people. While no AG

⁶⁵ Quoted in Daily, 6.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 7.

⁶⁷ Deloria’s engagement with the Episcopal church was inspired by his own father’s fight to help Native peoples within the church to gain more control over the missionary program. Vine Deloria Sr. was an Episcopal priest and the first Native director of the national mission program in the 1950s. Deloria Sr. also encountered political obstacles within the Episcopal Church and eventually resigned his post to return to regular parish life. For a short overview, see Philip Deloria, “Vine Deloria Sr.” in The New Warriors: Native American Leaders Since 1900, ed. R. David Edmunds (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 79-98.

Indian leader referred to the American Indian Movement (AIM) in any published AG record (such as the *PE*), Brother Lee did advise missionaries to “be aware of current Indian thinkers” in order to be in tune with the young people of the tribe.⁶⁸ This comment suggests that Lee probably read Deloria during this period, as well as the works of other Indian activists. In fact, in Deloria’s hugely successful bestseller, *Custer Died For Your Sins*, he proposed a national, Indian-run Christian church. AG Indian leaders had watched how AIM and other activists on the reservations demanded their rights throughout the early 1970s, and while Native Pentecostals did not embrace the violence and outward anger of the Red Power Movement, they did move to channel some of their own grievances into a call for action.

While a comparison to Deloria’s work with the Episcopal Church is useful in understanding how other denominations dealt with Indians, it is also important to compare the Indian struggle to that of other ethnic minorities within the AG. The AG targeted Latinos for evangelization shortly after its formation in the early twentieth century. The ministry to Latinos shared some similarities with the ministry to American Indians. A sympathetic female white missionary founded an ethnically specific Bible college for Latinos, which fostered the development of a distinct Latino Pentecostal identity.⁶⁹ More important than the similarities between the two groups, however, were

⁶⁸ Turning Point, 18.

⁶⁹ The white female missionary champion of Latinos (specifically Mexicans) was Alice Luce. She founded the Latin American Bible Institute in 1926 and was a forerunner to Alta Washburn. Like Washburn, Luce preached autonomy, but she also remained maternalistic in her approach toward supervising Latino evangelists and pastors in the field. (It appears that Washburn might have been similar to her in this, but the sources that remain do not say much on this subject.) For more information on Luce and the LABI, as well

the differences. Unlike the missions program to American Indians, the missions program to Latinos grew rapidly, developed a Latino leadership early, and eventually became powerful enough to have its own autonomous districts.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, American Indians remained under the home missions designation and general white district control. While Latinos, like American Indians, waged long battles against the perils of paternalism, they fit more comfortably into the Assemblies of God and developed innovative ministries such as the Vineyard Church movement that came out of the AG.⁷¹

Three reasons for these differences present themselves: first, the size of the ethnic group; second, the social location and mobility of the group; and third, the “cultural baggage” of the group in terms of integrating into white America. Latinos were the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States in the twenty-first century; American Indians, in contrast, only made up 2 percent of the overall American population. Latinos often started out as poor immigrants, but they usually found their way into the working class and in many cases the American middle class. While poverty and prejudice were factors inhibiting Latino economic growth, Latinos did not face the daunting obstacles that American Indians did on reservations, where economic and social struggle were institutionalized, the products of hundreds of years of federal Indian policy. Finally, although Latinos certainly encountered racism and prejudice as well as anti-immigrant

as the development of Latino Pentecostal identity, see, Arlene Sanchez-Walsh, Latino Pentecostal Identity: Evangelical Faith, Self, and Society (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

⁷⁰ Edith Blumhofer, The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 2:173.

⁷¹ Sanchez-Walsh, 3, 5.

sentiment from white Americans, at least their presence was well acknowledged.⁷² Most Americans remained largely unaware of the modern American Indian struggle and even forgot that Indians lived among them. Modern American Indians remained in the shadows of the collective American imagination, which viewed them as a vanishing race.

The habit of freezing Native peoples out of leadership roles in Native ministries continued into the twenty-first century. In her work on Native evangelicals, Andrea Smith discovered that “it is important to understand how Native ministries replicate the colonial structures of the United States and Canada. That is, much more than any other racial or ethnic minority church or parachurch organizations, Native ministries are controlled by non-Indians.”⁷³ This pattern also proved to be the case for the AG’s missions to American Indians, especially when compared to the Latino ministry. Unlike Latinos, American Indians were not a group large enough and geographically concentrated enough to demand their own district organization, so they worked to gain control of the missions program through other types of organizations and leadership. And while the indigenous church ideal was more fruitful numerically for Latinos than for American Indians, the Indian leadership within the AG was not willing to give up on their goal.⁷⁴ That American Indians continued working with the AG to define themselves as Pentecostal Indians was extraordinary given that the AG had given them a national leadership position in name only.

⁷² See Sanchez-Walsh, esp. chaps. 4 and 5.

⁷³ Andrea Smith, Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 94.

⁷⁴ Blumhofer, 2:173-174.

Yet the conflicts of both groups also show the inherent flexibility of Pentecostalism, a religion embraced by many different ethnic identities while its core beliefs remained the same. Historian Arlene Sanchez-Walsh comments on this fact in her analysis of Victory Outreach, a movement that grew out of the Latino community to address problems of violence, gang membership and drug abuse.

Pentecostal worship fulfills certain needs: its orality, music, intercessory prayer, testimony, informality and relaxing of class signifiers such as dress and occupation. There us an invitation in Pentecostal churches to imbibe in the ritual life of Christianity available to the marginalized and the outsider that many do not find in mainstream Protestant churches.⁷⁵

Sanchez-Walsh's explanation for why Pentecostalism proved so popular among the dispossessed holds true not only for the former inner-city gang members that she studied, but also for American Indians. Despite everything that the Indian leadership went through in their effort to gain national recognition within the AG, they remained within the denomination because Pentecostalism gave them something that they could not find in mainline Protestant Christianity. Sanchez-Walsh describes it as "Pentecostalism's transcendent value: an offering of a ritual life to groups who do not feel welcome in other surroundings."⁷⁶ American Indians found this "transcendent value" in the AG and pushed the denomination to live up to its own Pentecostal values.

In the case of African Americans in the AG, their history is much more troubling than that of Latinos. After the earliest days of the Pentecostal movement, the races

⁷⁵ Sanchez-Walsh, 122.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

separated, and the AG became known as the “white” Pentecostal denomination, while the Church of God in Christ became known as the “black” Pentecostal denomination. The reasons for the separation stemmed from both racial and theological factors.

Theologically, COGIC was rooted in the Holiness movement, while the AG’s roots were in the Keswick movement. Racially, the AG decided in 1939 that it would not ordain African American pastors, and instead urged them to seek ordination in COGIC.⁷⁷ During the pre-Civil Rights era the AG did not support integrated churches and often depicted African Americans in the *PE* as simple, uneducated people who all spoke in the same “colored” dialect.⁷⁸ It was not until after the Civil Rights movement that the AG began to move toward integrating churches. In the 1970s, the denomination began to address how to reach out to African Americans, and develop an African American ministry.⁷⁹ The AG did not face its past with African Americans until 1994, when, at the Memphis Colloquy of the Pentecostal Fellowship of America, the AG finally repented of its racism.⁸⁰ Like American Indians, African Americans carved out autonomy in their own ethnic fellowships in the 1990s. In 2004, the AG claimed only 269 preponderantly African American churches.⁸¹ Compare this with the 1989 statistic on Indian churches—the AG had 189 Indian churches and missions.⁸²

⁷⁷ Howard N. Kenyon, “An Analysis of Ethical Issues in the History of the Assemblies of God” (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 1988), 84.

⁷⁸ Joel Raybon, “Race and the Assemblies of God Church: The Journey from Azusa Street to the ‘Miracle of Memphis’” (Ph.D. diss., University of Memphis, 2005), 114.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁸² “Native American Churches,” 21 July 1989, Uncatalogued, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

The history of African Americans within the AG tells us that the AG was often loath to challenge the perceived American status quo. While segregation was the norm in the U.S., the AG quietly retained segregated churches. The AG changed after the Civil Rights movement, but it did not join the movement, and often discouraged its members from seeking social change. Native peoples, however, did find more autonomy early on in the AG, and unlike African Americans they gained appointments as missionaries and pastors in the pre-Civil Rights era. This difference stemmed from a different approach toward the two ethnic groups—Indians, because of their perceived “heatheness,” became objects of missionary work, whereas African Americans, who already had deep ties to Protestant Christianity and who were members of the Pentecostal movement from the outset, were relegated to their own separate denomination. Also, institutionalized and personal racism made it very hard for the AG to step beyond stereotypes toward African Americans. In this way, Native peoples and African Americans within the denomination both suffered from ethnocentrism and paternalism. The white leadership in Springfield assumed that it knew what was best for its minority constituents. Native Pentecostals, however, were able to use the indigenous principle as the driving force of change within the denomination. African Americans, not viewed as a missionary target like Indians, could not marshal this theology of missions in the same way. Also, Native peoples did not possess a denominational alternative to the AG, unlike African Americans, who already had a long history of their own churches.

Although the last letters in the Indian Representative archival file carry dates in late 1981, other sources reveal that over the next two decades the Indian leadership

continued to fight. Brother McPherson remained the Indian Representative until the early 1990s, when William Lee (called Bill Lee, a Navajo and Charlie Lee's nephew) assumed the post. In 2000, Brother John Maracle, nephew of the early Mohawk evangelist Andrew Maracle, became the Indian Representative. In 2008, he remained in the post.⁸³ From the last letters in the file, we know that Brother McPherson continued to struggle with the demands of his job as Indian Representative. The same problems surface repeatedly. Notably, Brother McPherson left out of his public autobiography the story of his tenure as Indian Representative—his frustrations appeared only in the private letters. The AG created the position to appease Indians and to quell dissention, but Native leaders wanted Brother McPherson to be an instrument of change, something the very nature of the job and lack of funding kept him from accomplishing. The Indian leaders within the AG, realizing Brother McPherson was not personally responsible for the stasis brought on by the problems with the position, fought even harder for change. For the next two decades, the 1980s and 1990s, they endeavored to find a new way to achieve leadership positions within the AG.

6.3 The Role of the Indian Representative and the Formation of the Native American Fellowship at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century

The main concerns of Native leaders in the 1980s and 1990s were addressing the shortcomings in the Indian Representative position and finding a better way to make Native voices heard. This determination resulted in the creation of an American Indian

⁸³ John Maracle, Phone Interview, 1 August 2007.

Fellowship within the AG—a move that gave them an autonomous space within the AG and the possibility of voting rights in the Executive Presbytery.

Lack of funding for the Indian Representative remained the most important problem. Instead of focusing on his duties as Indian Representative, Brother McPherson spent much of his time itinerating for funds. Indian leaders were not the only ones who recognized that a lack of money was a problem. In a letter to Home Missions Director T.E. Gannon, Brother Paul Markstrom, a fellow Special Ministries missionary, pleaded for financial support for position.

I believe it is a weakness for Brother McPherson to only spasmodically give time throughout the year. May I recommend that a block or two of time be utilized (such as 13 weeks) where John would be fully employed to discharge these responsibilities... Since Brother McPherson would be duly representing the American Indian ministry it does appear as though we have a financial responsibility for salary and travel expenses comparable to that of a full-time representative. Therefore, I strongly urge that a budget be established for these financial responsibilities...⁸⁴

Likewise, Indian missionaries formally asked the 1979 General Council to amend the Indian Representative job description from “part-time” to “full-time.”⁸⁵ The minutes, however, do not indicate whether the General Council adopted the proposal.

In the early 1980s, the Indian leaders began to demand that the AG provide funding for the Indian Representative. Their plan advocated a 5 percent tithe on

⁸⁴ Paul Markstrom to T.E. Gannon, 20 October 1980, filed under “John McPherson: American Indian Representative,” Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

⁸⁵ General Council Minutes, 1979, from General Council Minutes and Reports, 1914-1999, Heritage Digital Documents, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, 63.

missionaries to Indians. This plan would free the Indian Representative from his constant fundraising and obligate the Indian missionaries to support him monetarily. The idea never made it to the floor of the General Council, although Indian leaders and others affiliated with Home Missions discussed it. The counterargument was that such a tithe would hurt other divisions of the AG Special Ministries. American Indian leaders had to find a new plan.⁸⁶

During the General Council of 1989, American Indians brought to the floor a resolution to create a Native American Ministry Department. They wanted to develop a separate department just for Indian missions under the auspices of Home Missions. This would change the practice of keeping Indian missions under the umbrella of Intercultural Ministries in Special Ministries and Home Missions and would give the Indian leadership more influence in the running of Home Missions. The resolution also called, again, for making the Indian Representative position full-time, and it offered several different ways to pay for the proposed department as well as the Indian Representative. The proposed means of funding included: special contributions designated for Indian missions, one-half of the tithes of nationally appointed home missionaries in Indian work, and a recommended monthly contribution from each Indian congregation. After some discussion, the General Council referred the resolution to a special committee.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ John Maracle, Phone Interview, 1 August 2007. Maracle was present at all the General Council meetings during the 1980s and recollected events that were not included in the official AG minutes.

⁸⁷ General Council Minutes, 1989, Resolution 11, from General Council Minutes and Reports, 1914-1999, Heritage Digital Documents, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, 93-96.

The referral of the resolution to committee gave Indian leaders some hope, but a problem immediately arose. The committee did not include a single Indian member. A professor from the American Indian College, Brother Don Keeter, noticed this oversight and publicly petitioned for Indian input into the committee.⁸⁸ But the AG did not rectify this problem. During the 1991 General Council, the committee recommended the rejection of the resolution for three reasons. First, the resolution did not make adequate provision for financial support; second, a Native American Ministry Department would damage the financial and administrative structure that currently existed; and third, such a department would not solve the problems facing Indian leaders.⁸⁹ The committee instead recommended that Indian churches be “encouraged” to give support to the Indian Representative so that the position could become full-time and funded. The committee also asked Home Missions to allow the Indian Representative to have more national visibility and to encourage the Indian Representative to serve as a liaison between Intercultural Ministries and the Native Pentecostal population.⁹⁰

The suggestions of the committee meant that the Indians were back to square one—they were still fighting the same battle that they had been fighting ever since the creation of the Indian Representative position. Their Representative was still not officially funded or officially full-time. They still had very little control over the policies of Home Missions or Intercultural missionaries. The quagmire of AG bureaucracy and

⁸⁸ John Maracle, Phone Interview, 1 August 2007.

⁸⁹ General Council Minutes, 1991, “Study Committee Report: The Feasibility of a Native American Department,” from General Council Minutes and Reports, 1914-1999, Heritage Digital Documents, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, 56.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

mistrust of real change left them with little hope. Since Brother Charlie Lee had returned to his reservation in the early 1940s, he and other Indian missionaries had been battling to make their voices heard at the national level. Now, Indian leaders decided to try a new tactic.

During the General Council of 1995, ethnic minority leaders within the AG proposed a resolution to allow for the creation of “Fellowships” among certain groups within Intercultural Ministries. Each ethnic and special group would maintain a separate Fellowship that would aid in the training and evangelization of their people. Almost as soon as the AG approved the fellowships, Indian leaders seized the opportunity to establish one and use it to implement some of the changes that they envisioned. The Native American Fellowship, established in 1996, was self-funded and self-supporting and existed separately from both Home Missions (now U.S. Missions) and Special Ministries. It was an autonomous space not overseen by any other governing body of the AG. The participants of the Fellowship, made up of Native Pentecostal laity and Native leaders, elected the three-member board. Those three board members retained seats on the General Presbytery to speak for Native Americans and also enjoy the opportunity to serve on the Executive Presbytery.⁹¹ The stated goals of the Native American Fellowship

⁹¹ One representative was chosen through a vote from all of the representatives of the various ethnic fellowships (Native American, African American, Latino, Gypsy, and Jewish) for a seat on the Executive Presbytery. According to John Maracle, who as of 2009 was President of the Native American Fellowship, from 2004-2006 the fellowship leaders chose the African American Fellowship President as their voice on the Executive Presbytery.

were to facilitate evangelism to Native peoples and to encourage leadership opportunities among Native missionaries and pastors.⁹²

But the creation of the Native American Fellowship did not solve all of the problems that Indian leaders had been trying to address. As of 2007, the job of Indian Representative, now called Native American Representative, remained unfunded by the AG and lacked any real influence in Home Missions or Special Ministries. The position was not formally linked to the Native American Fellowship, although the 2007 Native American Representative happened to be the president of the fellowship. The Native American Representative remained under the jurisdiction of the General Council without specific voting rights, while the members of the Native American Fellowship's board had voting rights within the General Council. The Native American Fellowship remained free from the oversight of Home Missions or Special Ministries. Native Pentecostals raised their own money, ran their own elections and decided on their own agenda. In 2007, Brother John Maracle sat as both the President of the Native American Fellowship and as the Native American Representative.⁹³ Roger Cree, a Mohawk and the last of the early AG Native leaders, and Dennis Hodges, a Lumbee, were also on the governing board of the Fellowship.⁹⁴

If we compare the goals of the Native American Fellowship to the concerns outlined by Brother McPherson in his letters to Brother Gannon at the time of the

⁹² John Maracle, Phone Interview, 1 August 2007.

⁹³ The Native American Fellowship president position was an elected position. The Representative job was an appointment from U.S. Missions.

⁹⁴ John Maracle, Phone Interview, 1 August, 2007.

establishment of the Indian Representative position, we see that they were almost the same. According to Brother Maracle, the Native American Fellowship wished to facilitate the following among the Indian Pentecostal population: indigenous churches (meaning self-supporting with indigenous leadership and staff), more Native leaders and pastors, strong lay leadership programs, and the education of the youth and children.⁹⁵ All of these needs remained the same as those highlighted by Brother McPherson. But the creation of the Native American Fellowship made Native leaders hopeful. Although they had not eliminated the problems within the U.S. Missions Department or in the Native American Representative position, they finally obtained their own space to work with each other, as well as voting power within the General and Executive Presbyteries. The road for Native leaders had been long and difficult, but while Brother Maracle did not hesitate to say, “I don’t see any quick fixes,” he also expressed pride that evangelism remained strong among Native peoples.⁹⁶

6.4 Conclusion

For American Indian Pentecostals, the struggle for officially recognized leadership within AG and input over the missionary program to their people was a test of their faith in the institution. By the late 1970s, when the AIBI became a part of the official AG Bible school network and Brother Charlie Lee showed that an Indian congregation could become self-supporting and district-affiliated, things seemed to be looking up for Pentecostal Indians. Native missionaries and evangelists had shown the

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

AG that they were capable of innovation and leadership within their ministries. They also hoped to exercise more influence in the running of Home Missions. In order to make their mission public, they lobbied for an Indian Representative and received one, but they found the position to be fatally flawed. Conceived in 1977, the Indian Representative position proved ill defined, had little power or influence, and remained part-time and unfunded. This situation left the first Indian Representative, Brother John McPherson with a nearly impossible job.

Over the years, Brother McPherson sought to define the position of Indian Representative as well as to expand it so that the position would hold more power and influence as well as funding. Other Native leaders such as Charlie Lee, John Maracle and Roger Cree supported him in the 1980s and 1990s and tried at different times to bring their concerns to the fore during the General Council meetings. They also proposed the creation of a Native American Department, to gain influence over the running of the within the Home Missions Department, but white AG leaders thwarted them. Finally, with the creation of the Native American Fellowship, the Native leadership was able to create its own group, an organization apart from the influence of Home Missions and Special Ministries. The Native leadership relied heavily on the cooperation of progressive white Pentecostals, as well as other ethnic groups (African Americans, Latinos), in order to bring about the creation of the fellowships. With the Native American Fellowship came voting power in the General Presbytery as well as a chance for voting power in the Executive Presbytery. The Native American Fellowship was most certainly not an answer

to all the problems that had plagued the Native leadership within the AG, but more than anything else, it offered hope.

Given all the roadblocks and difficulties that the Native leadership faced in their struggle for official recognition and power, and given that many of their efforts met a formidable wall of bureaucratic resistance, it is a tribute to their devotion to their cause that they continued fighting. For many of them, the struggle for official recognition caused heartache and pain. For some, such as the first Indian Representative John McPherson, the fight cost them their health. But the Indian leadership within the AG was united in its purpose—they were Pentecostals, members of Assemblies of God, and they demanded to be heard. Leaving the denomination, or just giving up, could have been an easy way out of a difficult and painful situation. But the Indian Pentecostal leadership, including men like Charlie Lee, John McPherson, John Maracle, and Roger Cree, believed it was possible to be both Indians and Pentecostals, and they held fast to the indigenous principle. By continuing to remain Pentecostals within the AG while attempting to gain more power and recognition, they showed that they were not going to give up on the denomination that they had chosen to join. In their struggle, they solidified the possibility and reality of their Pentecostal Indian identity.

7.1 Conclusion: American Indian Pentecostals in the Twenty-first Century

On the afternoon of August 10, 2007, the members of the General Council of the Assemblies of God elected John E. Maracle to the Executive Presbytery.⁹⁷ Brother Maracle, a prominent Mohawk evangelist and the national Native American Representative, ascended to the ethnic fellowship seat. He joined seventeen other prominent AG leaders in the Executive Presbytery—the most powerful arm of the AG.⁹⁸ One hundred and one years after the great revival on Azusa Street, Brother Maracle became the first American Indian member of this exclusive governing board. After a long and frustrating twenty-year battle for tangible power and funding for the Native American Representative position, Native leaders finally gained a foothold into the AG's main governing body. The nephew of early Mohawk evangelist Andrew Maracle, John Maracle had learned about the importance of the indigenous principle directly from Navajo evangelist Charlie Lee, a beloved teacher and mentor.

By the end of 2008, all of the early Pentecostal leaders mentioned in this work, with the exception of Brother Rodger Cree, had died. Yet the legacies of the first generation of Native leaders lived on in the work and ministry of Brother John Maracle,

⁹⁷ Minutes of the 52nd Session of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Indianapolis, Indiana, 8-11 August, 2007, 44.

⁹⁸ The leaders of the Ethnic Fellowships elected John Maracle to the Executive Presbytery seat. Most of the seats on the Executive Presbytery were defined by U.S. region: Northwest, Southwest, North Central, South Central, Great Lakes, Northeast, Southeast, and Gulf. The three non-regional seats in 2007 were Ethnic Fellowships, Language—Spanish, and Language—other.

in the work of countless other modern Native evangelists, and in the gradual changes in the AG. Although American Indians made up a tiny minority within the Assemblies of God, they were responsible for important changes in the way the AG approached missionary work—specifically missionary work to Native peoples in the United States. Their constant insistence forced the AG to move beyond merely mouthing the indigenous principle and gave Native people the opportunity for autonomy in the denomination.

The heart of this work is the power that the indigenous principle gave Native Pentecostals to engage their own denomination. In Pentecostalism, the indigenous principle was not a radical concept—it was, in fact, rooted deeply in the theology of the movement. But many of the missionaries who carried the Gospel both overseas and among groups in the United States failed to realize the indigenous principle's implications. The AG only changed its approach to missions to American Indians because Pentecostal Indians used the denomination's own theological commitments to challenge its practice. Because any Pentecostal could wield the authority of the Holy Spirit, Native Pentecostals, in theory, held as much spiritual authority as any other Pentecostal. Even though they encountered ethnocentrism and paternalism, they still challenged the AG hierarchy, because as Pentecostals, it was their spiritual right to do so. And even though the AG dragged its feet in developing Native leaders and the structures that allowed for indigenous churches, Native Pentecostals continued to form and re-form their own religious identity in light of their struggle with the AG.

For Native Pentecostals, the indigenous principle became more than just a theology of missions—through their struggle for it, they defined their Native Pentecostal

identity. They turned a theology into a practice—a distinctly Native Pentecostal practice. They *lived* the indigenous principle in their fight for autonomy within the AG—it was not simply a theology to be learned as a theory. By viewing the struggle for the indigenous principle as a form of Christian practice, we see how foundational it was to Native Pentecostal experience. Native Pentecostals lived out the indigenous principle by promoting, creating, and supporting indigenous churches, the AIC, and Native leadership. They used Pentecostal methods to do so, but their struggle focused on Native autonomy—a struggle that is grounded in the American Indian experience. The process involved pain. Native leaders often mentioned the long struggle against paternalism to me when talking about the project, but they never wanted to discuss it extensively. They bore wounds from their internal struggle within the AG. Yet they, like their forbearers, still continued to engage the AG, and they remained within the denomination despite its difficult history with missions to Native peoples. The generations of Native peoples who have stayed testify to the fact that deep down, they found something within the Assemblies of God that spoke to them and was worth the struggle.

The long struggle changed the AG. As AG leaders approached the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, they expressed regret about how they carried out missions to Native peoples. When I met with the late AG historian Gary McGee and first told him of my project over lunch, he frowned and remarked that the history was “a hard one for the Assemblies.” Jim Dempsey, one of the deans of the AIC in 2008, takes great pains to articulate the history of missions in his writings on American Indians, owning that “genocide, colonialism, bad faith and poor missiological practice were prevalent

throughout much of this historical period.”⁹⁹ He adds, “when Christians have decided to become truly concerned about Native people, our efforts toward outreach have often been clumsy and ineffective.”¹⁰⁰ Dempsey argues that it is not surprising that Native people are often indifferent and hostile toward Christianity, given their treatment by Christians. He acknowledges that Pentecostals have impeded their own mission, and he reiterates the indigenous principle: “The Native church is the answer. It must be authentically biblical and authentically Indian. This means that it must be connected to the body of Christ in America but must also be a truly Native incarnation of the gospel.”¹⁰¹ No longer a radical sentiment, Dempsey’s words come from a 2008 book on the AIC published by the Gospel Publishing House. The work of Native Pentecostals forced the AG to make the indigenous principle front and center in their continuing missionary work. It remains to be seen what further change will come from the public embrace of this long held theology that underpins Pentecostal missionary work.

The ideal of Native leadership for Native institutions within the AG remained incomplete. In 2009, the AIC gained a new president, David DeGarmo, a white educator who had a long history with the college. The fact is that the AIC, while it did have Native faculty and staff, persisted under a mainly white administration. The main reason given for this was that while there was growth in Native leaders trained for the ministry, very

⁹⁹ Jim Dempsey, “After Fifty Years...Now What?” American Indian College: A Witness to the Tribes eds. Joseph J. Saggio and Jim Dempsey, (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 2008), 388.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 389.

few Native leaders possessed the advanced degrees necessary to run an accredited college.

As Native leaders fought for the indigenous principle, they provided an answer for a vexed question in both religion and Native American studies: Can an American Indian be both a Christian and an Indian? As this work shows, the answer to that question is complicated, even moving beyond the parameters that the question itself sets up. In her work on Native evangelicals in the modern Christian Right and Promise Keepers movements, Cherokee activist Andrea Smith emphasizes: “The relationship between Native and white evangelicalism is simultaneously one of reinscription and contestation.”¹⁰² Smith stresses that trying to understand Native peoples who belong to what have been defined as right-wing Christian groups such as the Promise Keepers “troubles” many long-held assumptions about evangelical Christianity *and* Native peoples. She closes her chapter on Natives in the Promise Keepers movement by noting, “the work done by Native evangelicals through race reconciliation demonstrates that, despite the problems with this movement, the Christian Right is an unstable formation that offers possibilities for progressive rearticulations.”¹⁰³ Smith argues that as Native participants in the movement continually rearticulate their place and identity as Native evangelicals, the movement itself also undergoes continual change. Smith’s point of view reminds scholars that Christianity does not remain frozen in time, but instead is constantly redefining itself and its place in the world. With Smith’s words in mind, I have

¹⁰² Andrea Smith, Native Americans and The Christian Right: The Gendered Policies of Unlikely Alliances (Durham, Duke University Press, 2008), 75.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 113.

intentionally tried to “trouble” how scholars understand modern missionary work to Native Pentecostals, showing how Natives have engaged a historically white Christian denomination through the practice of the indigenous principle.

This work has tried to paint a dynamic picture of both Christianity and Native culture. Native cultures shifted dramatically after contact—often because of Christianity. These changes were often harmful, even devastating, to Native communities. Missionaries wielded Christianity as a way to force the Americanization of American Indians. But the dynamics of conversion, cultural change, and religious identity have always been a two-way street in American religion.¹⁰⁴ As historian James Axtell stressed, Native peoples who became Christian did so under their own authority and for their own reasons.¹⁰⁵ Modern American Indian Pentecostals chose the “Jesus Way” for a variety of reasons, and, in doing so, engaged the AG and carved out a space for their people within a large and powerful white American denomination. Native Pentecostals saw themselves as both American Indians and as Christians—that is how they defined their identity. For that reason, it is problematic for any scholar to say that they cannot be both, because to do so would be to impose one’s own ideas upon these people, and in the process, second-guess their agency in the shaping of their own religious identity.

Scholarship in Native American studies and religion is now carefully stepping beyond the worn Christian-Indian question. This work, dealing with faith, theology,

¹⁰⁴ Catherine L. Albanese, “Exchanging Selves, Exchanging Souls: Contact, Combination and American Religious History,” in *Re-Telling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Thomas A. Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 224-226.

¹⁰⁵ James Axtell, “Some Thoughts on the Ethnohistory of Missions,” *Ethnohistory* 29 (1982): 54-55.

practice, resistance, gender, and race, tries to ask a better question—how did both white Christians’ and Native peoples’ engagement with each other shape the ways that both groups constantly rearticulated their religious identities in the changing American religious landscape? In this approach, I tried to leave room for the shape-shifting of both groups as they continue to grapple with both the past and the present, and I provide an example of how scholars can utilize the tools of church history, American religious history, and Native American studies in order to create new narratives of the Native religious past.

The story of Native Pentecostals offers a case study in how a small group of people within a larger religious community utilized their religious beliefs in order to enact profound change that challenged the status quo. The history of Native Pentecostals offers scholars a different lens to view American Pentecostalism, and specifically the Assemblies of God. As the study of American religion has expanded to include a variety of ethnic groups, the religious history of Native peoples remained at the margins. This study shows that Native peoples engaged Christianity in often surprising ways, and that they should not be a footnote or briefly mentioned—Native peoples deserve to be fully included in the history of American religion. Without the story of Pentecostal Indians, the history of the Assemblies of God is incomplete. If we ignore the work of Lee, McPherson, Washburn, and Maracle, we will never fully understand the shift toward the indigenous principle in home missions due to Native leaders’ engagement of the white AG leadership. Instead, scholars might think that it was the result of shifting trends in

multiculturalism rather than the product of an internal struggle that forced the AG to pay attention to those trends.

Without the history of Native Pentecostals within the AG, we would not understand how Native peoples so painstakingly carved out a space for themselves within Pentecostal Christianity. By not including this history, scholars shortchange the history of American religion. This work is not about “adding” voices into the narrative—it is about changing the historical narrative. How do we as historians rethink the actual structure of the narrative? Many of the main ideas of this dissertation apply broadly in the study of American religion. If we look at the religious experience and practices of minority groups as something that is fluid and constantly engaging all aspects of American society, how does that change the history of American religions? How does that challenge how we study minority groups?

Native American history, in particular, offers an important lens for viewing American history—it is a distinct history of struggle, conflict, resistance, and innovation of a minority group that, unlike almost every other case, is not based in the American immigrant experience. Scholars often interpret Native American history as constantly reacting to the juggernaut of imperialist white culture. Yet, as this dissertation shows, white culture reacted just as much to Native cultures, and sometimes Native peoples forced important and much needed change upon white Americans. Native peoples did not only actively shape their own history—they shaped the much broader history of American religions in profound ways that historians are only now beginning to realize. In order to acknowledge that, we must rethink how historians understand the structures,

narratives and histories of American religions. How differently would historians of American religion understand the AG if the histories of Native, Latino, and African American Pentecostals were allowed to challenge how we construct the story of the denomination in the first place? If historians reworked these histories, we would have a history as richly faceted as the American Pentecostal experience itself.

The history of Native Pentecostals within the AG is not a finished history. As the election of John Maracle to the Executive Presbytery shows, the story of American Indians within the AG is an ever-changing history. Native Pentecostals will continue to engage the AG and wrestle with what it means to be both Native and Pentecostal. And their definition of a Pentecostal Indian will change as they re-form their identities. My hope in writing this history of Native Pentecostalism with the Assemblies of God is not to give a single interpretation of the past, but to open the windows wide for discussions of Native religious identity. There are many ways to be Native in America. There are many ways to be a Native Pentecostal.

On a hot Missouri afternoon, in the summer of 2006, I was digging through a dusty box of files when the director of the AG archives, Darrin Rogers, walked in followed by two Native evangelists. Darrin introduced them as John Maracle and Rodger Cree, both Mohawk, who had come to meet me. As I stood to greet the men, John Maracle said to me, “We have been praying that the Holy Spirit would send us someone to tell our story. We can see now that he has sent you to us for that purpose.” I paused, startled, thinking that I made a rather unlikely messenger of the Holy Spirit, but I could see from the look on both men’s faces that the sentiment was genuine. The comment

reminded me of the Pentecostal worldview: what seems mundane to an outsider may seem providential to a believer. The next day, when I sat with Rodger Cree as he gave his testimony and life story, I listened carefully as the last remaining member of the first generation of Indian leaders related his own personal history. As he talked for more than two hours, sliding gently from English to French and Mohawk, I was struck by how the history of a denomination—something that is often regarded as a monolithic entity—is actually composed of the entwined stories of the people who make up that entity. Without Pentecostal believers, the Assemblies of God would not exist. Without the advocacy, struggle, pain, and stories of Native Pentecostals, the history of the Assemblies of God would be incomplete. Assemblies of God missionaries believed they were giving the ultimate gift of salvation to Native people. At the same time, those Native converts gave important gifts to the Assemblies of God—the audacity to hold the denomination to its deepest theological underpinnings, and the example of complex lives lived within a Pentecostal framework that dared to challenge and redefine what it means to be an American Indian and a Pentecostal.

Appendix A: A Representative Sampling of Missionary Demographics

Name
Hometown, Birthday
Education
Date of Ordination
Marital Status

Herbert Bruhn (White)
(No Hometown or Birthday Given)
High School Diploma
Jan. 29, 1937
Married

Ralph Willard Buchanan (White)
Lewismith, PA Nov. 24, 1914
Completed 10th Grade
Feb. 21, 1947
Married

Clyde S. Buck (White)
Walthill, NE Dec. 15, 1911
Completed 11th Grade
Apr. 7, 1949
Married

Lois L. Carruthers (White)
Lehigh, OK (No Birthday Given)
High School Diploma
Apr. 26, 1945
Married

Luther Cayton (White)
Louisville, KY Dec. 28, 1911
Completed up to the 10th Grade
Feb. 26, 1954
Married

Manuel Charles Cordova (Indian—tribe unspecified)
Healdsburg, CA Aug. 10, 1900
Completed 5th Grade
Feb. 20, 1957
Married

George Gray Effman (Indian—Klamath)
Klamath Agency, OR Sept. 28, 1922
Completed 10th Grade
Jun. 8, 1945
Married

Vera Eldridge (White/Indian—tribe unspecified)
Steber, OK Nov 18, 1913
Completed 9th Grade
(No ordination date given)
Single

James Eugene England (White)
Dallas, TX June 10, 1937
High School Diploma/B.A.- Central Bible College, Springfield, Mo.
Nov. 1972
Married

Pearl Marie Foster (White)
Easley, SC July 20, 1914
High School Diploma/Some Bible College—Shield of Faith Bible Institute
June 26, 1947
Single

Albert Foster Gomes (White)
(No Hometown or Date of Birth Given)
Completed 9th Grade
Jun. 16, 1932
Single

Virginia Ada Kridler (White)
Canton, OH Oct. 11, 1909
High School Diploma/3 year degree-Central Bible Institute, Springfield, Mo.
May 10, 1945
Single

Pearl Habig (White)
(No Hometown Given) Aug 16, 1916
Completed 8th Grade
April 24, 1953
Single

Lorraine K. Hampton (White)
(No Hometown Given) Dec 4, 1905
Completed 9th Grade
April 24, 1953
Marriage Annulled

Charlie Lee (Indian—Navajo)
Redrock, AZ April 14, 1926
High School Diploma/3 Year degree-Central Bible Institute, Springfield, Mo.
April, 1954
Married

John T. McPherson (White/Indian—Cherokee)
Drumright, OK Nov. 27, 1923
High School Diploma/2 Years of Bible College
Feb. 26, 1954
Married

Pauline Nelson (White/Indian—Cherokee)
Aurora, MO Dec. 1, 1895
Completed 7th Grade
Feb. 27, 1959
Single

Bert Parker (White)
(No Hometown Given) Mar. 27 1905
Completed 6th Grade
Feb. 4, 1954
Married

James Firdnan Pepper (Indian—Cherokee)
Eureka Springs, AK (Birthday not given)
Completed 8th Grade
Oct. 8 1926
(Single at age 21- according to reports in the *PE* he later married.)

David Wayne Philips (White)
Meminnville, OR 1923
High School Diploma/3 year Bible Institute Degree (school unspecified)
Jan. 29, 1948
Married

Norman Gordon Rehwinkle (White)
Milwaukee, WI Oct. 28, 1903
High School Diploma
Aug. 8, 1952
Married

Silas Stanton Rexroat (White)
(Hometown and Birthday not given)
Completed 10th Grade
Nov. 29, 1928
Married

Virgil Sampson (Indian—Pima)
Phoenix, AZ July 6, 1930
High School Diploma/ 2 Years Bible School- Southwestern Bible Institute (TX)
Feb. 5, 1963
Married

Charles Shelby Slater (White)
(Town not given) SD, June 3, 1906
Completed 9th Grade
(No Ordination date given)
Married

Caleb Virgil Smith (White)
Gilmour, IN Sept. 23, 1909
Completed 10th Grade
Feb. 12, 1953
Married

Arthur Thomas Stoneking (Indian—Winnebago)
Cedar Rapids, IA Sept. 28, 1925
High School Diploma
Mar. 3, 1962
Married

Oliver Blackman Treece (White)
Forest Grove, MI Jan. 22, 1908
Completed 8th Grade
July 23, 1948
Married

Alta Mary Washburn (White)
Sandfork, WV June 28 1906
Completed 9th Grade
May 8, 1947
Married

Robert D. Wheeler (White)
(Town not given) CA Feb. 21, 1923
High School Diploma/Some Bible College (School unspecified)
Feb. 8, 1954
Married

Lyle C. Wolverton (White)
Beloit, KS May 20, 1918
High School Diploma
Feb. 4, 1958
Married

(All information taken from each missionary's "Deceased Missionary File" from their "Application for Ordination." All information is held by the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, Springfield, Mo.)

Appendix B: Native Churches in the U.S. in 1989

(All information is taken from the Department of U.S. Missions' archived files, Flower Pentecostal Center)

General Council Native American Churches 1989

All-Tribes Assembly of God, Phoenix, AZ
106 (Average Attendance)

Ball Club Assembly of God, Ball Club, MN
(No Attendance figures given)

Mesa View Assembly of God, Shiprock, NM
180 (Average Attendance)

Fayetteville Assembly of God, Fayetteville, NC
132 (Average Attendance)

Shannon Assembly of God, Shannon, NC
150 (Average Attendance)

Indian Revival Center of Bell Gardens, Bell Gardens NC
125 (Average Attendance)

Indian Revival Center of Dallas, Dallas TX
82 (Average Attendance)

Morgan Siding Assemblies of God, Morgan Siding WI
52 (Average Attendance)

Churches With Native Pastors 1989

Bylas, AZ
Cameron, AZ
Bapchule, AZ
Cibecue, AZ
Correzzo, AZ
Dennehotso, AZ
Eloy, AZ
Holbrook, AZ
Kayenta, AZ
Laveen, AZ

Maricopa, AZ
Oak Springs, AZ
Sacaton, AZ
San Tan, AZ
Scottsdale, AZ
Tonalea, AZ
Bell Gardens, CA
Porterville, CA
Winterhaven, CA
Brimley, MI
White Earth, MI
Hays, MT
Canoncito, NM
Carson, NM
Farmington, NM
Pinedale, NM
Shiprock, NM
Hogansburg, NY
Maxton, NC
Pembroke, NC
Raeford, NC
Red Springs, NC
St, Pauls, NC
Shannon, NC
Belcourt, ND
Fort Yates, ND
Anadarko, OK
Hammon, OK
Wright City, OK
Nespelem, WA
Wapato, WA
Couderay, WI

Location of Native American Churches/Missions 1989

Arizona

Ajo
Bitá Hooche
Bylas
Cameron
Camp Verde
Canyon Day

Carrizo
Casa Blanca
Casa Grande
Cibicue
Correzzo
Dennehotso
Eloy
Flagstaff
Fort Defiance
Ganado
Hickiwan
Holbrook
Houk
Laveen
Maricopa
McNary
Mohave
Parker
Phoenix
Polacca
Prescott
Sacaton
San Carlos
San Tan
Scottsdale
Sells
Shonto
Somerton
Stanfield
Teesto
Tonalea
Tuba City
Tucson
Whiteriver
Winslow

California

Auburn
Bell Gardens
Daggett
Friant
Hoopa

Porterville
Valley Center
Weitchpek
Winterhaven

Colorado

Denver
Ignacio

Idaho

Fort Hall

Illinois

Chicago

Louisiana

Elton

Michigan

Bay Mills
Grand Rapids

Mississippi

Philadelphia

Montana

Ft. Belknap
Hays
Lodge Grass
Lodge Pole
Poplar
Pryor Valley
Rocky Boy
St. Ignatius

Nevada

McDermitt
Nixon
Owyhee

New Mexico

Albuquerque
Canoncito
Crownpoint
Cuba
Dulce
Española
Farmington
Gallup
Grants
Mescalero
Navajo
Newcomb
Ojo Encino
Pine Cove
Pinedale
Prewitt
San Ysidro
Santa Fe
Shiprock

New York

Akwasane
Lawtons

North Carolina

Fayetteville
Maxton
Pembroke
Raeford
Red Springs
St. Pauls
Shannon

North Dakota

Belcourt
Ft. Yates
Tokio

Oklahoma

Bunch
Cache
Indiahoma
Hammon
Longdale
Okmulgee
Seiling
Wright City

Oregon

Mission
Mobridge
Rapid City
Sisseton
Wagner
Wakpala
Wood

Texas

Dallas
Fort Worth
Livingston

Utah

Blanding
Roosevelt

Wisconsin

Courderay
Gresham
Keshena
Luck

Oneida

Wyoming

Ethete

Washington

Auburn

Fruitland

Inchelium

LaPush

Neah Bay

Nespelem

Port Angeles

Port Gamble

Potlach

Seattle

Wapato

Wellpint

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Biography

Angela Tarango was born and raised in Whittier, Calif., where she grew up reading as many books as she could get her hands on. A deep affection for animals (especially horses) made her consider a possible career as a cowgirl, but the love of books eventually won out. She decided to become a college professor after watching her college mentor, Stephen Marini, give an electric lecture on the Second Great Awakening in her American religion class. She graduated cum laude from Wellesley College with degrees in History and Religion (Honors) in 2001. She received a Masters in Theological Studies at Harvard Divinity School in 2003, and in 2009 she graduated with a Doctorate in American Religion from Duke University. Starting in Fall 2009, Angela will be the Assistant Professor of U.S. Religions in the Department of Religion at Trinity University in San Antonio, Tex. Angela shares her home with her four-legged companions Milo (feline) and Chloe (canine) and is an avid knitter, crocheter, spinner, and beginning weaver. She has two main goals now that she has finished her dissertation—to earn tenure, and eventually to buy a small ranch where she can surround herself with dogs, cats, chickens, goats, a few horses and burros, and maybe an alpaca or two.