

R. Jeffrey Hiatt

*A Historical Account of the Pentecostal Mission and Its Contributions  
to the Church of the Nazarene*

**Abstract**

The Pentecostal Mission impacted the Church of the Nazarene, directly and indirectly, through the many influences of its people, mission policies, evangelistic method, ministries, doctrine, practices, organization, educational institution and pedagogy. The Church of the Nazarene still reflects the marks of those significant contributions in its daily operations today. The following study investigates some of the influences and contributions of the Pentecostal Mission to the Church of the Nazarene during its formative years. The timing of this article is dedicated in honor of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the joining of the Pentecostal Mission with the Church of the Nazarene.

**Keywords:** Pentecostal Mission, Church of the Nazarene, church history, Pentecostalism, Holiness Movement

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## Introduction: The Cultural Milieu of the Pentecostal Mission

### *Religious Climate*

Revivalism spread rapidly across the landscape of the United States of America. The “camp meeting” flourished in the Tennessee-Kentucky frontier in 1800, and rooted itself as a dominant method for religious expression and evangelism. Daily prayer meetings and strong lay involvement and leadership saw thousands of converts brought into the various churches in 1857-1858, as the Holiness Movement was in full swing (Walker 1970:508). The Second Great Awakening had reshaped religious expression throughout the nation. The enthusiasm of the public worship services, were typified by the preaching of lay evangelist D. L. Moody, the music of H. H. Rodeheaver, and the visitation of the Holy Spirit’s presence on the worshippers.

Spiritual excitement was widespread across mostly Protestant denominational boundaries. Rugged individualism that characterized and helped to produce the American frontier also touched the nature of religious expression amid the air of growing Christian religious variety. The “lively experiment” in America was reaping the harvest of splits and schisms in nearly all of the established Christian denominations (i.e., Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Methodists). Suspicion and division in the denominations over questions of ethics, morals, doctrines, congregational structure, and administrative methods and authority foreshadowed the national political divisions within the states, surfacing on the horizon.

Internal disputes over Christian doctrine and practice and the intervention of the Civil War (1861-1865), however, did not stop the revival. Deep convictions and religious experience shone into the very camps of the soldiers. At least one song, “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” even reflects the religious emotions of Christian hearts and minds caught up in the struggle to be faithful to their homeland and yet, be faithful to God (*Worship in Song* 1972:506).

The 1890s glowed with optimism as the movement of God’s Spirit continued to move across the nation. “The Great Century” was rolling into its zenith in an abundance of revivals, people movements, and mission global activity (Latourette 1953:1078).

### *Cultural Factors*

Nashville, Tennessee, was a strategic center of this activity. It was perched like a crown on the Highland Rim overlooking the new South. River access by the Cumberland River provided good navigation, making industrial commerce



advantageous. Intersected by major thoroughfares and railroads with key bridges to cross the river, Nashville drew traffic and trade into the city from all directions.

The Parthenon was built in 1897 to demonstrate the city's love of the arts. With educational opportunities expanding for both African-Americans (Fisk University, 1866) and Anglo citizens (Vanderbilt University, 1873) of the society, Nashville was becoming known as the "Athens of the South." Nashville had gained the attention of many people searching for new beginnings, financial security, business (Benson 1980:3) and religious opportunities. During October 1911, four separate holiness conventions, reported in local newspapers, held meetings simultaneously in Nashville (*Nashville Tennessean* and *The Nashville American*, October 15-20, 1911). Into this bustling, cosmopolitan atmosphere the Holiness Movement made an impact.

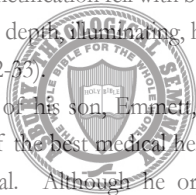
### **J. O. McClurkan: Mission in the Heart**

James Octavius McClurkan was born into a rural middle Tennessee community on November 13, 1861. As the son of an itinerant Cumberland Presbyterian preacher, he early came to appreciate a godly heritage that included Bible reading, intense prayer, and a passion for others (Heath 1947:9-10).

McClurkan needed all of the gentility and meekness available to him. Growing up during the reconstruction period (c. 1865-1880), a Southerner could have easily been influenced by the bitter dregs of the hard times. Instead, J.O. McClurkan developed "a hunger and thirst after righteousness," became an avid reader, and followed in the footsteps of his preacher father. He responded to the call of God and gave himself to preaching the Gospel. Rev. McClurkan married a devout and earnest Christian, Martha Rye. Together with their four children, they brought the Good News to thousands across the country.

This journey led him to pastorates in Texas and California, and evangelistic meetings at all points in between. He was a loved pastor and popular preacher. McClurkan's driving desire to see souls around the world won to the Lord, found many opportunities. The Lord even used him through personal evangelism in the railroad coaches that he rode in to get to his revival meetings. During his ministry in California, the fire of entire sanctification fell with burning on his heart. His already strong ministry took on added depth, illuminating, humbling, and empowering him for more work (Heath 1947:32-35).

In 1896, the illness of his son, Emmett, brought the McClurkans back to Tennessee, to seek some of the best medical help available through Nashville's Vanderbilt University Hospital. Although he originally intended to return to



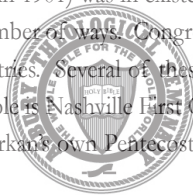
California, a near fatal case of pneumonia left him too weak. Thus, Nashville became his base of operation for the remainder of his life and yielded the most significant fruit of his ministry labors. With the new fire of sanctification in his heart, God's servant was preparing for the next phase of his ministry.

During McClurkan's first two years in Nashville, he conducted revival campaigns throughout the area. As one of the chief proponents of the Holiness Movement, the doctrine of entire sanctification and its attendant social, ethical, and moral responsibilities were a prominent focus of his preaching. The Lord used this to pave the path that led J. O. McClurkan, for a decade and a half, into an influential leadership position of the Holiness Movement in Middle Tennessee and Nashville in particular (*Nashville Tennessean* and *The Nashville American*, September 17, 1914).

### **The Beginnings of the Pentecostal Mission**

Concerned individuals and representatives from various holiness groups, especially from Middle Tennessee, gathered on July 18-20, 1898, at a holiness convention in the old Tulip Street Methodist Episcopal Church - South (Heath 1947:57). The result of this meeting was the formation of The Pentecostal Alliance to "utilize and perpetuate the work wrought in ... holiness meetings" (Redford 1935:123). John T. Benson, Sr., the newly elected Pentecostal Alliance Secretary, writes, "The Convention was held...for the purpose of organizing the holiness people of Middle Tennessee into some kind of band for the promotion of God's work" (Minutes, July 18, 1898). This first recorded convention accomplished: 1) adopting a name for the uniting holiness movement groups - "The Pentecostal Alliance", 2) began issuing credentials to preachers and Christian workers in the name of the Pentecostal Alliance, 3) formulated initial steps to establish a program for Foreign Missions, 4) created strategies to organize Pentecostal Alliances - prayer bands, mission groups, and circles of believers...to be included in the movement, 5) made plans to write, adopt, and print a set of "Rules and Practices" for the Pentecostal Alliance, and 6) elected an executive committee to carry on the work (Benson 1977:25-26). This convention became the cornerstone of the holiness wave known as the Pentecostal Mission.

During the 17 years that the Pentecostal Alliance (reorganized and renamed Pentecostal Mission in 1901) was in existence, the Lord used his servants to bring in the harvest in a number of ways. Congregations were established, many with "street" and social ministries. Several of these churches continue to operate today. One of the most notable is Nashville First Church of the Nazarene (1898), which originated from McClurkan's own Pentecostal Tabernacle congregation. In



2014, it had a membership of approximately 1,700, and is situated just 100 yards from its original location.

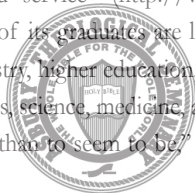
Minister, missionary, and lay ministry Pentecostal Mission Certificates were given to members who evidenced the gifts and graces for holiness ministry. After the Pentecostal Mission joined the Church of the Nazarene denomination, these certificates were recognized as official and valid credentials (Benson 1977:193).

The “Union Gospel Wagon” street and tent meetings were an evangelistic means of going to where the people were to bring them the message that a saving and sanctifying relationship with Christ was available today. The Pentecostal Mission was heavily involved in compassionate ministries, such as the Door of Hope rescue mission for girls (from which they withdrew after March 19, 1901) and founded the “Pentecostal Training Home for Girls” (orphanage and school) to share the love of Jesus through “cups of cold water” (Minutes, March 19, 1901).

From the beginning, it was important to the Pentecostal Mission leaders to get holiness messages and teaching into the hands of the people. The holiness message on the printed page could go to places where a holiness minister could not regularly go. A weekly publication (first *Zion's Outlook*, later succeeded by *Living Water*) was printed and sent out to anyone who asked (Benson 1977:123). These publications contained holiness messages from Rev. McClurkan and other holiness preachers, teachings on holy living, articles from other Pentecostal Mission lay persons, Pentecostal Mission news and ministry information, solicitation of funds for missions, and convention summaries, etc. Other literature and music was also published through the Pentecostal Mission Publishing Company (later known as the John T. Benson Company).

### **Emphasis on Mission Work**

The Pentecostal Mission placed a high importance on the education of ministers and lay leaders. A school was started for “Bible lessons and Christian training” (Benson 1977:35), emphasizing missions, evangelism, and the pastoral ministry. This school was named Trevecca College (1901). Over the years it expanded to become a liberal arts university with an emphasis on holiness in any chosen vocation. “Trevecca Nazarene University is a Christian community providing education for leadership and service” (<http://www.trevecca.edu/about/about>, accessed 12/1/2015). Many of its graduates are leaders in their fields, especially in the areas of Christian ministry, higher education, holiness writings (publications and books), Nazarene missions, science, medicine, and business. The TNU motto: *esse quam videri*, “To be rather than to seem to be,” points to the holiness message



of entire sanctification as a Christ-centered life through and through that manifests itself in one's daily routines.

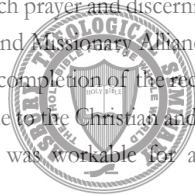
From the beginning, the Pentecostal (Alliance) Mission was burdened for the lost around the world. To serve the Lord in this area, a foreign mission board was appointed, foreign mission policies were formulated, offerings for missions were taken, and potential missionaries were sent as the opportunity arose. Relations were strengthened between A. B. Simpson's Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination in New York, primarily to provide an umbrella for missionary training, placement, and service on foreign soil (Minutes 1899). J.O. McClurkan, himself, had a strong sense of urgency for missions. In his pastorates, prior to the organization of the Pentecostal Alliance, McClurkan was instrumental in seeing that several missionaries were sent to other countries. He had personal plans to preach in several of those countries, but was restricted by his frail health.

The Eleventh Hour Movement, which was adopted by the Christian and Missionary Alliance and popular in Evangelical circles at the time, fueled the flame for strong missions sending programs. The Eleventh Hour Movement consisted of the idea that we are in the eleventh hour, "one hour" before Christ's return. The motivation and underlying theology for mission in the movement, as well as McClurkan's group, is expressed in these words,

The Alliance people [should] give liberally to the evangelization of the world, stating that the promise was that the Gospel message be first proclaimed to every creature and that when this was accomplished Christ would return and establish His millennial kingdom on earth (*The Nashville Banner*, November 19, 1900).

Therefore, the gospel must be spread to all lands as soon as possible. This intense zeal of "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" hastened many a person to the foreign mission field (*Zion's Outlook*, March 7, 1901:1). The race against "time" was on.

For the first four years of the Pentecostal Alliance (1897-1901), missionary candidate "process" was for the persons to first present themselves to the leaders. Sometimes a personal interview occurred, but many times only correspondence letters were written. After much prayer and discernment, selected candidates would first be sent to the Christian and Missionary Alliance missionary training school in Nyack, NY. After satisfactory completion of the required training, they were sent to work in a specific country. Due to the Christian and Missionary Alliance missionary training school, this process was workable for a time, but later developments



necessitated an alternative that resulted in the founding of Trevecca, as mentioned earlier.

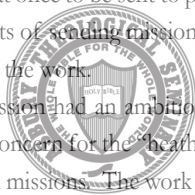
McClurkan dreamed of keeping the Holiness Movement, as he knew it, inclusive. He desired all adherents of the doctrine of entire sanctification to be welcome. With a strong resolve to remain aloof from denominational connections, as well as disagreements over the “tongues” issue, he began to distance the Pentecostal Alliance from the Christian and Missionary Alliance. For example, when the word “alliance” began to equate them too closely with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Pentecostal Alliance effected a name change in October 1901, to the Pentecostal Mission (Minutes October, 1901).

As questions arose over financial support and payment of salaries to Pentecostal Mission personnel serving in the field (China) with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Foreign Executive Committee of the Pentecostal Alliance began talking about and planning for a separation of the work of the two groups. The Christian and Missionary Alliance Mission Council wanted the Pentecostal Alliance to join them in funding all of the missionaries under the Christian and Missionary Alliance umbrella. After prayer, deliberation, and clarification, the Pentecostal Alliance consensus felt that this was not financially feasible, nor true to their chosen “undenominational” purpose.

In the November 4, 1901 Foreign Executive Committee Minutes, some distancing occurred, as a resolution was passed to “discontinue supporting other missionaries than those sent out by the Pentecostal Mission” (Minutes, November 4, 1901). This separation made some people very anxious. The constituents worried over the ability of the Pentecostal Mission to continue its work in the foreign mission fields. The general consensus accepted, “that new fields of missionary work be opened up as the Lord opens the way” (Minutes, November 4, 1901). Some of the missionaries chose to stay in the ranks of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (i.e. W. A. Farmer), but for some like the R. S. Andersons, this was an opportunity for a fresh start in a new field.

Following this decision, the door was now open to new countries. Several people who were called by God to missionary service, but had never before asked to serve under the Pentecostal Mission (i.e. Leona Gardner), began presenting themselves to the Committee at once to be sent to places around the world. Studies were done to ascertain the costs of sending missionaries to those fields, supporting their families, and maintaining the work.

The Pentecostal Mission had an ambitious missionary thrust. The zeal of their leaders and the deep concern for the “heathen” fueled the selfless sacrifices in giving and going for foreign missions. The work progressed rapidly. More fields



were added to the growing roster: Cuba (1902), Guatemala (1903), India (1904), Peru, Bolivia, Belize, and Argentina (1909). The work in China was slow, but still existed (*Living Water*, August 13, 1914:16). By the time they joined the Church of the Nazarene in 1915, there were 33 missionaries in eight countries, holding certificates as Pentecostal Mission ministers and Christian workers, and sent out under the Pentecostal Mission, Incorporated (with a charter granted by the state of Tennessee).

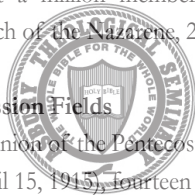
Some of the early missionaries sent out by the Pentecostal Mission, did not stay long, but returned home and needed to be replaced. This short tenure was a point of frustration, especially to the Foreign Executive Committee. Travel was expensive and many of the short-lived projects and personnel did not promote the work well. So, they devised a better screening process, including interview(s), and an application, both of which would serve to answer twenty carefully selected questions (Minutes, October 30, 1902). Following the union with the Nazarenes, and the election of John T. Benson, Sr., first as vice president (1915), then as President (1919) of the General Board of Foreign Missions, this process would be incorporated into the denominational missionary screening procedures (Parker 1988:31).

Formerly, the Nazarenes had allowed the women of the denomination to begin the “Women’s Foreign Missionary Society,” but had not given official action of organization to make it an auxiliary of the denomination. The Pentecostal Mission supported its missionaries and mission work in similar zealous ways. Following the incoming deluge of the missionary minded Pentecostal Mission people; this became a reality at the 1915 General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene (Redford 1934).

The implementation of the organization of the society was left to the work of the General Board of Foreign Missions. On October 18, 1916, the above-mentioned board appointed a three-member committee to put it together, notably Mrs. Eva G. (John T.) Benson was one of the three. Two other Pentecostal Mission names that figure prominently in the leadership and operation of the Nazarene World Missions Society, in the ensuing years, are Miss Fannie Claypool and Mrs. R. G. Codding (Parker 1988:70-71). Today, it is known as Nazarene Missions International, and has about a million members worldwide (Annual Church Statistical Report of the Church of the Nazarene, 2015, p. 2).

### Expansion of the Early Mission Fields

At the time of the union of the Pentecostal Mission with the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene (April 15, 1915), fourteen of the thirty-three missionaries





agreed to become Nazarenes (*Living Water*, August 13, 1914:16). Each missionary was given the individual opportunity to join the new denomination. It was also agreed that the Nazarene General Missionary Board would “assume financial responsibility for the missionary work of the Pentecostal Mission” (*Herald of Holiness*, Feb. 24, 1915:10). “The work in India with nine missionaries, Cuba with five, and Central America with four”, were transferred, along with all of the missionary work, under the board of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene (Parker 1988:28).

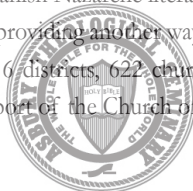
### *India*

The Nazarenes were about to close the work in the “western field” of India, when the Pentecostal Mission united with them. Several missionaries and a growing work in Khardi, Vasind and Duhlia, kept the effort moving ahead. A boys’ school was established in Khardi at the main station, and a girls’ orphanage and school in Duhlia was started (Parker 1988:219). The untimely death of several of the missionaries and the poor health of others hampered the Lord’s work in India. Yet the “comprehensive India mission policy drawn up [and influenced strongly by Reverend R. G. Coddling, the field superintendent from the Pentecostal Mission ministry], was so well prepared, that it became the basis for a missionary policy statement adopted for the entire overseas program for the denomination.” (Parker 1988:220)

The work in India today reflects 14 districts, 1972 churches, and 107,175 full members (Annual Church Statistical Report of the Church of the Nazarene, 2015).

### *Guatemala*

The open door to Guatemala was extended to the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene via the R. S. Andersons (1904-1945), who united with the Nazarenes in 1915, from the Pentecostal Mission. Other missionaries followed to assist with the work, including the Anderson’s daughter and son-in-law, and Mrs. Anderson’s sister (Parker 1988:430). Rev. and Mrs. J. T. Butler, Miss Augie Holland, and Miss Effie Glover brought a printer from the United States, and began the publication of *El Cristiano*, which was a valuable adjunct to the work for 42 years and provided the basis for the now extensive Spanish Nazarene literature ministry (Parker 1988:423). In 1910, a school was started, providing another way to serve the people. The work in Guatemala today reflects 16 districts, 622 churches, and 78,212 full members (Annual Church Statistical Report of the Church of the Nazarene, 2015).



### *Cuba*

Miss Leona Gardner, a dedicated missionary, marched in the Pentecostal Mission ranks before serving with the Nazarenes. She spent 25 years in Cuba (1902-1927), nine of which (1905-1914) were carried on her shoulders alone. She gave another seven years to Guatemala (1927-1934), and pioneered the work in Belize (1934-1938). For three-and-a-half decades, she plowed, planted, and watered in anticipation of the harvest being gathered in these areas today. Presently in the Church of the Nazarene, Cuba has 2 districts, 90 churches, and 7,117 full members. Belize has one district, 58 churches, and 2,821 full members (Annual Church Statistical Report of the Church of the Nazarene, 2015).

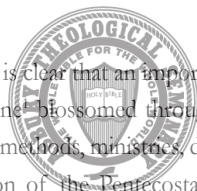
### *Argentina*

Reverend and Mrs. Frank Ferguson started the work in Argentina in 1909, under the banner of the Pentecostal Mission. At the time of the union, the Fergusons chose to continue the work independent of denominational ties, but in 1919, entered into the fellowship of the Nazarenes. The Rev. and Mrs. Ferguson gave 18 more fruitful years to Argentina (1921-1939), and then strengthened the work in Cuba (1919-1920), Peru (1920-1921), and the Mexican Border (1944-1952). Prior to joining the Nazarenes, they served the fields of Cuba (1903-1905), Peru 1906-1907), and Bolivia (1907-1908). (Mrs. Ferguson died in 1944). (Parker 1988:650) At present, Argentina has 12 districts, 236 churches, and 14,073 full members. Mexico has 15 districts, 689 churches, and 53,253 full members (Annual Church Statistical Report of the Church of the Nazarene, 2015).

As a result of the faithfulness of these missionaries, several nationals heard the call of God. Through the church, they received the training needed to go into Christian service, became leaders themselves, and reproduced the fruit of the Spirit into the lives of others. The seeds these early missionaries planted are continuing to bear fruit today. The Church of the Nazarene today has a little over 700 missionaries, serving under its banner of holiness in 159 world areas, through more than 2 million members (<http://nmi.nazarene.org/10149/story.html>, accessed December 1, 2015).

### **Conclusion**

Within this study, it is clear that an important impact in the development of the Church of the Nazarene blossomed through the many contributions and influences of people, policies, methods, ministries, doctrine, practices, organization, and the educational institution of the Pentecostal Mission. Mission work was



started and flourished in several countries. Churches were and are continuing to be planted. Compassionate ministries abound. Trevecca Nazarene University is a thriving educational springboard centered on Christian Holiness. Through the influence of the Pentecostal Mission, “more than 40 evangelists were sent” (*Nashville Tennessean* and *The Nashville American*, September 17, 1914), thousands were saved and sanctified, and the Holy Spirit transformed lives.

Phineas F. Bresee, one of the first Nazarene General Superintendents was known for his quip, “The Church of the Nazarene is in the morning of its existence, and the sun never goes down in the morning.” As the denomination moves past the centennial years of its feeder roots, its heart is still ablaze for the Christian Holiness and mission around the world. It has never been truer, than it is today, that the sun never sets on the Church of the Nazarene, due, in part, to the missional vision and impact of those early Pentecostal Mission leaders.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Pentecostal” was dropped by General Assembly action in 1919, because of the term’s association with “tongues” (Redford 1935).

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