

Our Heritage

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA

*"An Historical Tracing of the Origin and
Development of the General Council,
Christian Church of North America."*

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Comment: Rev. DeCaro's discerning analysis of the key issues and the almost inevitable development of events, invite earnest reflection and purposeful commitment.

C.S.

Introduction

*I*n this book is represented a twentieth century miracle of grace, a saga of faith, and a candid appraisal of the ever-present human element—the grit, the chaff, and the dross that encroach upon grace, the grain, and the gold.

A highly perceptive author identifies the varied strains—the delicately interwoven threads which make up the rich tapestry of a Movement that reflects the zeal, the impetus, and the constraining impulse of the early New Testament Church, as recorded in the Book of Acts.

The rehearsal of pertinent events, developments, and basic trends peculiar to the history of the Christian Church of North America points up the tensions that shaped the character and structure of a Movement committed to maintain the entire spectrum of truth, convinced that the varying hues of a prism are, in fact, authentic manifestations of the selfsame ray of Light.

The uniqueness of the CCNA consists not in its cultural roots, nor in its phenomenal growth, but in the fact that it recapitulates the entire gamut of Evangelical thrust, from the Era of the Reformation to modern-day Pentecost.

The reader, whatever his denominational preference, will no doubt glean appreciable profit in perusing the pages of this historical record, but especially in pondering the author's message. The book commends itself to every serious-minded student and seeker of the Living Way. Its vision is vital. Its challenge is chastening. Its key, the unfailing charisma of the Lord Jesus Christ.

July 15, 1977
Carmine Saginario

Prologue

The Christian Church of North America relates to the Italian Pentecostal Movement in the United States whose roots are imbedded in a larger revival movement - the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit in America at the turn of the 20th century.

The uniqueness of the early Italian Pentecostal Movement may be found in its Holy Spirit baptism and its fully articulated Gospel message. This movement, in its primitive years, and for some years after, served a distinctive purpose: it sought to diffuse the knowledge of the blessings of the New Testament Church among Italian people.

While moving toward the ideal in spiritual blessings and development, the Italian Pentecostal Movement, like all other religious movements, was not free of disturbing human frailties. Nevertheless, this movement was a great blessing to many Italo-Americans who found Christ and were, by Him, baptized in the Holy Spirit.

From this original Holy Spirit revival in the Italo-American community there emerged what is today known as the General Council of the Christian Church of North America and its associated Assemblies in the United States who now support the work of missions among all people, at home and abroad.

Any attempt at writing the history of this movement will fall short of depicting accurately the abundant miraculous experiences shared by Italo-Americans, especially during the early years of the movement. The manner by which the Lord called Italians, redeeming them, filling them with the Holy Spirit, healing them, and leading them during those pioneer years points to a history of ineffability and fullness of glory!

At the moment of this writing there are among Italian Pentecostals some octogenarians such as Brother Peter Dell'Aringa of Malaga, New Jersey, converted in 1904, and Sister Mary Tosetto of Niagara Falls, New York, converted in 1911, who have distinct recollections of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in its pristine glory. Their memory and testimony of the divine largess experienced in the former years of the movement are reminiscent of those elderly Israelites who, in the days of the newly constructed second temple under Ezra, recalled the glory of the first house in the early years of Solomon's reign.

This present feeble effort to recount the history of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in any detailed manner falls short of its best intentions, leaving much to be desired. There are reasons for this which must be passed on to the reader.

First of all, the ineffable glory of those early years could not be adequately recounted, even by the most veloce writer. Secondly, the modesty of the most prominent fathers in the movement did not permit them to record the many magnanimous operations of the Holy Spirit. They felt sincerely that any attempt to put in writing the workings of the Spirit might have made possible the intrusion of the human ego into those accounts of the divine operations attributable only to the Holy Spirit.

Due to the absence of a fully developed patristic account of the history of the Italian Pentecostal Movement, a history of that spiritual patrimony had to be constructed from brief patristic testimony, and from observations, written and verbal, of individuals who could attest to the history of this great spiritual legacy.

The written testimonies of Louis Francescon and Peter Ottolini, two of the earliest fathers of the movement, have been utilized in this writing.

There are individuals who have contributed their testimonies and other documented evidences attesting to the history of the movement. Anthony DeGregorio of Niagara Falls, New York, supplied us with abundant data from his files - information which he patiently and laboriously gathered and preserved for many years. For this we are most grateful.

Some testimonial data was also supplied by Pastor Alfred Palma of Syracuse, New York. A summary of the Italian Pentecostal Movement, prepared a number of years ago by Pastor Joseph Fiorentino, Boston, Massachusetts, was also consulted.

Our gratitude is expressed to all those whose prayers and witness made this writing possible; to those who contributed their documents and recollections of facts related to the movement. A word of appreciation is expressed to Joseph Fiorentino, Alfred Palma, and Frank Bongiovanni, appointed by the Executive Board of the Christian Church of North America to work as a Committee promoting the writing of this brief history.

Finally, we exalt and praise only our Lord Jesus Christ who made this movement possible through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Italian Pentecostal Movement is much greater than its feebly written history, so is the glory of our Lord and His Spirit infinitely greater than the movement itself.

The Christian Church of North America is grateful to God for the moving of His Spirit and for the spiritual heritage left by the founding fathers. We close this prologue by citing Paul's doxology in Ephesians 3:21:

*"Unto Him (God) be glory in the church by
Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world
without end. Amen."*

1 The Pentecostal Revival In The United States

We stated in the Prologue that the Italian Pentecostal Movement was part of a greater revival - the Pentecostal revival which began in the United States at the turn of the 20th century. We do well to consider first that revival and its social and political background.

It was the year 1900. Thirty-five years had elapsed since the termination of the great Civil War in the United States. Memories of that fratricidal conflict were still vibrant in the minds of the older generation while the newer generation sought to recover from the wounds of the then recent Spanish-American War.

William McKinley had been reelected to a second term as president of the United States. The violent spirit of Civil War days which led to the assassination of President Lincoln and later to the assassination of President Garfield was still present, for in 1901, an assassin's bullet claimed the life of President McKinley.

The mystery of iniquity continued to leaven the lump of American society at the dawn of the new century. Spiritually, the growth and activities of the false cults were mounting their competition with true Christianity. The much vaunted higher critics were attacking the authenticity and validity of the Sacred Scriptures, thus undermining the faith of many in Biblical truths.

Socially and politically there was unrest in the United States and in the world. The forces of Communism were about a decade or so away from a successful revolution in Russia. A Christian writer¹ of that era points to the then

military "offensive and defensive preparations" of the nations as being "on a scale of such magnitude" creating an "oppressive taxation" of the people. National debts, feared leading to national bankruptcy, were then beginning to mount. We wonder what that author would think of today's national and international situations if he were with us!

Despite violence, wars, and declining morals, the new century saw progress in science and technology. The forces of steam and electricity wrought more comfort and ease in homes and travel. Railway travel was booming. Educational facilities and the news media were making rapid advances. Better means of communication were rapidly progressing.

The conditions existing in the United States at the birth of the new century were regarded by true believers as indicative of the need of a genuine spiritual rebirth in the nation.

God, who is sovereign and always in control of every situation (Dan. 2:19-23; 4:17, 34-35; 5:21), does not permit history and events to work away from the context of His ultimate purpose. He holds the balance of power in the world of men and nations. The principle of this divinely sustained power balance in history is declared by Isaiah:

*"When the enemy shall come in like a flood,
the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard
against him" (50:19).*

Unknown to unregenerate man is God's way of counterbalancing the power of Satan in this world. Since the advent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, God, through the same Spirit, manifests His power at any time, but especially in times when Satanic forces appear to be overwhelming in history. The present Charismatic Movement is an illustration of this fact.

Against the background of growing social, political, and moral unrest at the turn of the 20th century in American history, God began to etch out a plan of revival—a mighty effusion of the Holy Spirit! Just as "the princes of this world" (1 Cor. 2:8) did not understand the purpose of Christ's presence among men, so in 1900 many "princes" of that era were unaware that God was invading the American social order with the mighty armada of the Spirit.

The Pentecostal revival in America had its origin in a Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, circa 1900. Why Topeka? Why not another city? Was Topeka more morally suited to host the revival than were other American cities? Were the believers in the Bible School more spiritually competent and more receptive to God's blessings than were believers in other cities of the nation? Were there not believers in other areas of the country seeking the Lord for a revival?

The questions just raised may have to remain unanswered for now. We do know however, that in the diversities of divine operation the principle is: "dividing to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. 12:11). God distributes His gifts and endowments according to His will and purpose. We are not consulted on this. God works according to the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:11). We are only asked to believe, desire, and receive. Having said this, we now return to the story of the genesis of the American Pentecostal Revival.

During the closing months of 1900 a Bible School was founded in Topeka, Kansas. The initial student body numbered about forty. Their lone textbook was the Bible and the study plan was to determine Bible teaching on the fundamentals of the faith. Their search for truth concerning the Holy Spirit led them to the conclusion that the evidence of the Holy Ghost baptism was "speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance."

One room in the school was set apart as the "Prayer Tower" where many hours, day and night, were spent in prayer and intercession. Meanwhile, the work of evangelism was not neglected, meetings being held in Topeka every evening. Evidence of God honoring their labor of love was seen in souls led to Christ, needs divinely supplied, healings, and other answers to their prayers.

On New Year's day, 1901, the first baptism in the Spirit, accompanied with speaking in tongues, was experienced by Agnes LaBerge, one of the students. This set in motion the wheels of the greatest Pentecostal revival in modern American church history.

The first Spirit baptism at the school in 1901 stirred the remaining student body, creating in them a hunger for a similar experience. Soon the Holy Spirit began to fall upon other students who assembled to pray, and one by one began

speaking in tongues, some also giving interpretations.

The initial Holy Spirit experiences in Topeka were soon "noised abroad". While the local newspaper criticized and ridiculed the speaking in tongues, other newspapers sent reporters to the school. Their subsequent news articles began to attract a wide attention to the revival in Topeka.

As a result of the continuing revival, doors were opened for a wider evangelistic effort. The attraction to this growing evangelism brought to a close the work of the school in Topeka because many of the students entered into home missions work, going south into Missouri, Texas, and other areas. The Lord crowned their labors with success, signs following their ministries.

As an aftermath of the revival in Topeka, a Bible School was opened in Houston, Texas, in 1905. One of the attendants at this school was a local black pastor, A. J. Seymor. Although he had not at that time received the Spirit baptism, he allied himself with the Pentecostal revival.

Pastor Seymor accepted an invitation to visit in Los Angeles, California. Cottage meetings were held on Bonnie Brae Street where both black and white suppliants, including Pastor Seymor, were filled with the Holy Spirit. Shortly thereafter the group relocated at Azusa Street, in a former Methodist Church. Here revival continued, men and women of all national backgrounds sought the Lord, having their lives changed, and experiencing the manifestations of the Spirit.

In 1906, following the Los Angeles revival, those filled with the Spirit went to other cities preaching the Gospel, including Chicago, Illinois. The initial Pentecostal services in Chicago were held in several locations, after which the mission relocated at North Avenue. The pastor of this mission was W. H. Durham who did not receive his Spirit baptism until March 2, 1907 in Los Angeles.

After the return of Pastor Durham to the Chicago mission, the work there began to acquire a new momentum. The power of God was greatly manifested. The Pentecostal revival at the North Avenue Mission followed similar patterns of Holy Spirit manifestations evidenced in other cities.²

It was at this point during the 1907 revival at Chicago's

North Avenue Mission that the Italian Pentecostal Movement was born. However, we will not move ahead of our story. We will return to Pastor Durham and the North Avenue Mission later. We will trace, in immediately following chapters, the events among Italo-Americans leading to the North Avenue Mission and the genesis of the Italian Pentecostal Revival.

NOTES

¹ W. E. Blackstone, in **Jesus Is Coming**, 1898.

² We have gleaned this story from the book, **With Signs Following**, by Stanley H. Frodsham (Springfield, Missouri: The Gospel Publishing House, 1926).

Chicago

*A*mong the believers who had been filled with the Holy Spirit in the Los Angeles revival of 1906, there were those who moved on to Chicago where the seeds of the Pentecostal revival were faithfully sown. It might be in order to make some remarks about the city that later became the Jerusalem of the Italian Pentecostal Movement.

Chicago is situated on the southwest shore of Lake Michigan.¹ The city was founded some 175 years ago. By the late 1800's it had become an industrial and commercial giant. Chicago has been called the "city of the big shoulders" because of its reputation in doing things in a big way. It is the second largest city in the United States, the industrial giant and center of the midwest, and a great transportation center.

As is true with many cities, Chicago is sustained by the three basic elements pointed out in Genesis, chapter four. The city of Enoch, founded by Cain (verse 17), is the first metropolitan culture recorded in the Bible. Its three sustaining elements were agriculture (verse 20), music (verse 21), and manufacture (verse 22).

Historically, all cities have built their cultures on these basic elements. Chicago is known for its giant steel mills, forging plants, foundries, and the vast production of machinery. Musically, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is one of the greatest in the world. Although the famed stockyards and packing plants are moving westward, Chicago still plays a vital role in the movement of livestock and meats. Indeed, America's "windy city" ranks among the major cities in the world in population, manufacturing, commerce, and transportation.

The existence of a city is the direct result of Cain's act of murder. He set out to build his own substitute for Eden.

Indeed the city is man's greatest work. His civilization is expressed through his city. It is the expression of his desire for security.

Cities tend to polarize all human activities—economic, intellectual, and artistic. All outside activities are inevitably drawn to the city. The city exercises an influence capable of changing the life of an individual by bringing its power to bear upon that individual's spiritual life.

This city influence may be illustrated in the case of Nineveh. The prophet Nahum cried: "Woe to the bloody city! it is full of lies and robbery; the prey departed not" (Nahum 3:1). Again, the city influence upon people may be illustrated from the Jerusalem situation in early New Testament times. As Jesus wept over the city He said: "If thou had known at least in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace! But now are they hidden from thine eyes" (Luke 19:42).

The total influence of Nineveh and Jerusalem upon their inhabitants created an adverse spiritual situation. However, just as a city may have an adverse spiritual impact upon its people, that same city, because of divine intervention, may have its adverse spiritual influence counteracted, or at least restrained.

The preaching of Jonah, sent by the Lord, saved Nineveh from judgment (Jonah 3). The invasion of Jerusalem by the mighty armada of the Holy Spirit on that unparalleled day of Pentecost reversed the spiritual trend in the lives of many who were exhorted by a Spirit-filled Apostle to save themselves from the "untoward generation" (Acts 2:40).

In recalling the history of the Pentecostal Movement we observe that cities such as Topeka, Houston, Los Angeles, and Chicago were divinely visited. Through divine intervention it was possible for the influence of the city to be at least restrained. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the city allowed the ingathering of souls for the kingdom of God snatching them from the powers of darkness hovering over the city.

Chicago—the influential giant—was visited by anonymous Spirit-filled believers in 1906. This visitation resulted in the ingathering of souls and their experience in being filled with the Holy Spirit. Later, Italo-Americans were to be numbered

among the ingathered. Their time had not yet come. The point to be made is that the city of Chicago was destined to become the Jerusalem of the Italian Pentecostal Movement.

NOTES

¹. References to Chicago were taken from: **The New Book of Knowledge**, vol. 3, p. 227; **International Encyclopedia**, vol. 4, p. 305; **The World Book Encyclopedia**, vol. 3, p. 345.



The old North Avenue Mission in Chicago where, in 1907, Francescon received his baptism in the Holy Spirit.

③ An Italian Immigrant In Chicago

In continuing our pursuit of the origin of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in America we ought to review what has been fundamentally observed thus far. The greater revival—the Pentecostal revival which began in the United States in 1900—spread to Chicago in 1906. The North Avenue Mission, pastored by W. H. Durham, hosted that revival.

As stated in the previous chapter, Chicago was destined to become the Jerusalem of the Italian Pentecostal Revival which took place in 1907. We also indicated that we would return to Pastor Durham and the North Avenue Mission after tracing some events among Italo-Americans taking place prior to 1907.

In tracing those events we ought to consider the story of a pioneer Italian immigrant who arrived in Chicago some thirty or more years before the Italian Pentecostal Movement was born. This story is recorded by Leonard Erutti in his introduction to the booklet titled "The Life and Mission Of Pietro Ottolini." Erutti begins his brief account of that Italian immigrant by pointing to a spiritual principle. He says:

"Many people have been identified as instruments in the hand of the Lord, by whom His name was, and is glorified. However, there were individuals who, at first glimpse, seemed not of great importance because their activity was not related to the manifestation and development of this movement; yet they were instrumental in carrying forth the Gospel."¹

Erutti identifies one Giacinto Bartolomei who arrived in Chicago during the early 1870's. This individual, as the account later shows, was not actively related to the founding and the development of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in 1907. However, he was, in the words of Erutti, "instrumental in carrying forth the Gospel"... "to kindle a desire in other people for whom the Lord had assigned a higher plan, which in time would be well known."²

From the above we gather this thought: while Giacinto Bartolomei did not immediately relate to the origin of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in 1907, he was nevertheless an instrument in God's hands preceding those who were chosen and assigned the role of pioneers within the framework of the Italian Pentecostal Movement.

As noted above, Bartolomei emigrated to Chicago in the early 1870's. Chicago's population at that time numbered some 300,000. That city had, at the time, fresh memories of the disastrous fire of 1871. Ulysses S. Grant was then president of the United States. In Italy, the revolutionary activities of the two Giuseppe's had taken root. The pen of Mazzini and the sword of Garibaldi had brought about a political reformation and unification of Italy.

During the early days of Bartolomei's pilgrimage in Chicago he married a Jewish young woman. Through that relationship he became acquainted with the Bible which he regarded as a book rich in literary and moral values. After a few years of marriage Bartolomei separated from his wife and took up residence with a niece who was married to Peter Menconi. This name will appear later among the names of the early pioneer families in the Italian Pentecostal Movement.

The immediate point of interest is that the Menconis were neighbors and close friends of the Ottolini family which also, at a later date, became a pioneer family in the Italian Pentecostal Movement. The upshot of the Bartolomei story, at this point, is that Giacinto shared his Biblical appreciations with the youthful Menconis and Ottolinis prior to the year 1900.³ We will return to these developments later.

The purpose in reviewing the Bartolomei story has been to show that this Italian immigrant, and his interest in the Bible, was instrumental in introducing the Bible to two Italian families who later became part of the original Italian

Pentecostal Movement begun in 1907. While nothing more is recorded about Giacinto Bartolomei, it is witnessed by Leonard Erutti that Bartolomei remained a faithful believer until his death.⁴

NOTES

1. **The Life and Mission of Pietro Ottolini**, page 1.
2. Ibid., page 1.
3. Ibid., page 1.
4. Certified in correspondence from Leonard Erutti, October 3, 1975.

Italian Protestants In Chicago

As previously indicated, the Italian Pentecostal Movement has its roots within the greater Pentecostal revival beginning in the United States in 1900. This greater revival spread to Chicago in 1906, the city destined to become the Jerusalem of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in the United States.

Also previously pointed out was that certain events were yet to transpire among Italo-Americans before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them beginning in 1907. A preliminary event was seen in the Bartolomei story, the highlight being that he introduced the Bible to the Ottolini family—an experience which would later merge with the events among Italian Protestants in Chicago prior to 1907.

The account of those principal events taking place among Italo-Americans in Chicago before the birth of the Italian Pentecostal Movement may be dated between 1890-1907. Those years and beyond were times when Italians freely emigrated to the United States. In the main, those immigrants settled in Italian ghettos. While the ghetto life style is not encouraged in today's revamping social order, it may very well be that the Italian ghetto in those days served the purpose of facilitating the communication of the Gospel among Italian immigrants.

Those Italian immigrants were an industrious people, willing to work and establish themselves in the new world. While many of them were undoubtedly of Roman Catholic persuasion, there was a remnant who either possessed Protestant inclinations or no religious persuasion at all. Among the Italian immigrants in Chicago, during the years



The place at Lake Michigan where the first 70 Italian believers were baptised in 1907.

1890-1907, there were Waldensians and others possessing Protestant views. These people were formerly of northern Europe where they, no doubt, acquired their Protestant background.

Among those Italian Protestants were men who, potentially, had been chosen by the Lord to assume leadership in the near future Italian community of Holy Spirit baptized believers. Subsequent history showed those men to be of staunch apostolic-like spirit. We point to three of the earliest of those leaders and offer a brief biographical sketch of each:

Luigi Francescon: Born on March 29, 1866, in Cavasso Nuovo, province of Udine, Italy. He was a worker in mosaic. After the completion of his military service he emigrated to the United States, arriving in Chicago on March 3, 1890. He experienced the new birth in Christ in December 1891, following the hearing of the Gospel preached by the Italian Evangelist Michele Nardi. On January 1, 1895, Francescon married Rosina Balzano, who had also experienced the new birth early in 1892.¹

Giuseppe Beretta: The only available information concerning Beretta's earlier personal life is that he was saved among the Free Methodists. The date of his born again experience is said to be 1898. Beretta's testimony indicates that he was baptized in the Spirit, speaking in other tongues while among the Free Methodists. Because he could not understand this moving experience, Beretta, being overcome with fear, refused to acknowledge that experience, remaining content to set it aside.² Later, by 1922, while in Syracuse, New York, Beretta became persuaded and knowledgeable on the experience of the Holy Spirit baptism.

Pietro Ottolini: Born on November 11, 1870, in Pescaglia, province of Lucca, Italy. He emigrated to the United States, arriving in Chicago on September 11, 1891, where he was directed to an Italian colony. There he met the Pacini family whose daughter Emma he married in 1893. Here is where the Bartolomei incident merges with the story of Italian Protestants in Chicago.

It was now 1900. Pietro and Emma Ottolini were neighbors of Pietro and Angelina Menconi. Bartolomei, uncle of Angelina, lived in the home of his niece. Bartolomei introduced the Bible to Angelina's neighbor, Emma Ottolini.

Since Bartolomei could not offer a satisfactory Biblical witness to Emma, he asked his friend Giuseppe Beretta to offer the witness to Emma and her husband. This was the beginning of the conversion of the Ottolini family. On February 18, 1900, Pietro Ottolini experienced the new birth of Jesus.³

We have observed thus far that the Lord began to call out Italian people in Chicago during the period of 1890-1907. Francescon saved in 1891, Beretta saved in 1898, and Ottolini saved in 1900, would shortly begin to emerge as prominent early leaders in that Italian Evangelical Community.

The early growth of that first Italian Evangelical Community and its consolidation will be the subject of the next chapter.

NOTES

- ¹. Taken from a brief autobiographical monograph by
- ². The Life and Mission of Pietro Ottolini, page 5.
- ³. Ibid., page 3.



The Grand Avenue Mission in Chicago, home of the first Italian Pentecostal Church in the United States, founded in 1907.

Italian Protestants in Chicago Organize

The Italian Protestants in Chicago, during the early 1890's, began to crystallize into an ethnic evangelical community out of which later emerged the Italian Pentecostal Movement in the year 1907. From a few fragmentary reliable sources we have gathered the following data:

The Italian Evangelist, Michele Nardi, had been evangelizing among Italians in Chicago at least as early as 1890. This seems to be confirmed in Luigi Francescon's autobiography. Francescon indicates he arrived in Chicago in March 1890. "That same year," says Francescon, "I heard the Gospel preached by Brother Michele Nardi." Obviously, Nardi had already been evangelizing among Italians in Chicago at the time of Francescon's arrival in that city in 1890. Further information also points to the fact that Nardi had succeeded in assembling a group of Italian Protestants, mainly Waldensians, in the Railroad YMCA Hall where he held Gospel services with them.¹

The work of further organizing this Italian Protestant Community is indicated in the testimony of Francescon. He states: "In March of 1892, with a company of evangelized persons under M. Nardi and a few families of the Waldensian persuasion, the first church of Italian Presbyterians in this city was organized, having Philip Grilli for pastor. I was chosen one of three deacons, and a few years later was named Elder."

Francescon's testimony of the founding of the first Italian Protestant Church in Chicago in 1892 is confirmed by the written testimony of the late Michael Palma. Further

evidence of the founding of the first Italian Protestant Church in Chicago in 1892 appears in a letter dated March 1961, from The Chicago Library, quoting official information from the records of the Presbyterian churches of Chicago. The letter was addressed to Anthony DeGregorio of Niagara Falls, New York.

The information in that letter indicates that the newly organized Italian Protestants, sixty-four in number, purchased a lot for the church on West Ohio Street. The money for the purchase was granted by a Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Willing. Whether the construction of the place of worship began in 1892 is not clear from the letter, nor from Francescon's testimony. However, the written testimony of Michael Palma states: "Two years later, in 1894, this same group, aided by a \$10,000 donation from the Fourth Presbyterian Church, built a church building on West Ohio and Halstead Streets, Chicago, Illinois, which was called "The First Italian Presbyterian Church."

The point to be gleaned from all of this information is that the Italian Protestants in Chicago were organized and formed a body of believers in 1892. Further developments in this community will be reviewed in the next chapter.

NOTES

¹. From the autobiography of Luigi Francescon and the written testimony of Michael and Kathryn Palma supplied by Alfred Palma.

6 The Status of the Italian Presbyterians

*T*he time: about the year 1900. The political and civic affairs of Chicago continued their usual routine. Undoubtedly, Chicago's Protestant community by this time was made aware that another Presbyterian church was established in the city. This time, it was an "Italian" Presbyterian Church — the first ethnic Presbyterian community of Italian background, worshiping and preaching the Gospel in the romantic language of a distant sunny Italy. The pastor was Filippo Grilli.

The growth of the Italian Presbyterian Church is evidenced in the testimony of Pietro Ottolini. The reader will recall from a former chapter that Ottolini's wife received a copy of the Bible from Giacinto Bartolomei, after which she was instructed in the way of salvation by Giuseppe Beretta who led both Angelina and Pietro to the Lord in February, 1900. Then followed in succession the conversion of one Demetrio Cristiani; Peter Menconi, his wife and his two brothers; the families of Agostino Lencioni and Vittorio Giometti. Later, the families Dell'Aringa, Groppi, Giachetti, and Andreoni also became believers. The impression received from reading fragmentary available data is that these conversions took place not too long after 1900, but before 1907.

Ottolini credits Beretta with having evangelized all of the above-named families. These new converts relied on Beretta for Bible teaching and spiritual counseling. Because he felt inadequate to the task of feeding this little flock, Beretta advised the group to consider attending services at the new Italian Presbyterian Church. Pastor Grilli gladly received them and Beretta.¹

It must be remembered that Luigi Francescon and others were already in the Italian Presbyterian Church, having been charter members since its inception in 1892.

This testimony of the growth of the Italian Presbyterian Church is substantiated by the comments of Michael Palma in his testimony. He states: "After several years" (presumably after the construction of the new edifice for worship) "the number of believers increased considerably in the church..." He then proceeds to identify some of the same families recorded in Ottolini's testimony as having been led to the church by Beretta.²

The immediate status of the Italian Presbyterian Church at that time is described by Ottolini: "Now it appeared to everyone that while we were all gathering in one church, attending the same services, there were really two distinct separate factions. One, the old members of the Presbyterian Church and the other, the followers of Beretta."

By "old members" Ottolini referred to those who had been evangelized by M. Nardi since 1890, including Francescon and some Waldensians who were the founders of the Italian Presbyterian Church in 1892. The "followers of Beretta" were those evangelized by him and introduced by him to the Italian Presbyterian Church by the year 1900.

Ottolini testifies that the cohesive force holding these two factions together was Pastor Grilli, "a pious and prudent man, who always tended to harmonize the differences and graciously favored our presence among them."³

Such was the status of Chicago's enlarging first Italian Presbyterian Church in the very early 1900's. What appeared to be harmony was perhaps at best superficial. Shortly thereafter, discord arose. The causes of the disharmony are set forth in the following chapter.

NOTES

¹ **The Life and Mission Of Pietro Ottolini**, pages 4-5.

² Testimony of Michael Palma, supplied by A. Palma.

³ Ottolini, same as above, pages 5-6.

7 The Dissension Among Italian Presbyterians

The preceding chapter closed with a somewhat pessimistic note in respect to a continuing harmony among the Italian Presbyterians. The causes of the growing discord and discontent are clearly shown in the testimonial data left by the late Francescon and Ottolini. The unresolved issues ultimately led to a secession of some from the church in 1903. The situation may be delineated as follows:

1. As early as 1894 — two years after the founding of the church — Francescon questioned the mode of water baptism practiced among the Italian Presbyterians. His testimony is that, one evening in 1894, he was prayerfully reflecting the passage of Scripture in Colossians 2:12: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

In consequence of his reflections, Francescon was seized with a compelling conviction. He believed he was brought to the realization that he had not complied with the mode of water baptism taught in that Scripture: that is, baptism by immersion.

Francescon sought to share his convictions with other leaders in the church, but to no avail. The continuing indifference toward his convictions and exhortations on the question of water baptism undoubtedly became one cause for an undercurrent of unrest among the Italian Presbyterians. We will return to this situation and its climax shortly.

2. At this point we will consider what was another cause of discontent among the Italian Presbyterians. The reader will recall that the followers of Beretta were introduced by him to

the church. According to Ottolini, this move took place about two months after his conversion, which sets the date of the beginning of their worship in the church at about April, 1900. At the time Ottolini and the others were brought into the church, Beretta cautioned and counseled them against accepting enrollment in the official membership of the church.

Whatever the reasons were for Beretta giving that counsel is not made clear in the data immediately available. One may assume that perhaps it was a distaste for organizational structure — a strong sentiment which prevailed at length in the future Italian Pentecostal Movement. But this is only a conjecture. Nevertheless, the counsel given by Beretta gradually developed into a gnawing issue. In the earlier part of 1903, while Pastor Grilli was still in Italy, the church administration brought the issue to a culminating point: either the Beretta group accept official membership or forfeit their right of expression in the church.

Because this issue could not be satisfactorily resolved, Beretta and his group left the church. Ottolini testifies that when Pastor Grilli returned from Italy he did not find them in the church. Thus we observe that the second cause of unrest undoubtedly festered during the time Beretta and his group remained in the church (1900-1903). Meanwhile, the other cause of unrest — the issue of water baptism — had not yet arrived at a climactic point.

We now return to that issue and Francescon's climactic stand. We recall that Francescon remained adamant in his convictions on water baptism by immersion. Prior to the secession of the Beretta group from the church, Francescon did not relent in his exhortations, enjoining Beretta frequently on that point of doctrine. However, even Beretta at that moment could not grasp Francescon's insight into the matter.

In the very early days of September 1903, sometime after the Beretta group withdrew from the church, Francescon spoke again to Beretta, urging him to comply with the mode of water baptism he believed the Lord had shown him in Colossians 2:12. Within two days, Beretta was baptized by a minister of the Church of the Brethren. Enthused and

rejoicing, Francescon requested Beretta to baptize him on Labor Day, Monday, September 7, 1903.

On Sunday, September 6, 1903, Francescon, as an Elder in the church, presided in the service because Pastor Grilli had not yet returned from Italy. In the course of his presidency during that Sunday service Francescon publicly declared his intentions: "Now, nine years after that time when the Lord bade me do His will, tomorrow shall I do so, and all who wish to share with me must come to the Lake at such and such a place."

On the following day — September 7 — about twenty-five persons accompanied Francescon to the water baptismal service. According to his testimony, eighteen in number were baptized with him by Beretta.

After the return of Pastor Grilli from Italy, Francescon requested time in a Sunday service to address himself to the congregation. He first exhorted the Church to submit to the obedience of God's will in water baptism. Secondly, he submitted his resignation from the position of Elder and membership in the church. According to Ottolini's testimony, Francescon and a few other families who left the Presbyterian Church united with the Beretta group who, as will be recalled, had previously left the same church.

In review: the reason for dissension among the Italian Presbyterians was fundamentally twofold: Francescon's adamant stand on the issue of water baptism and the reluctance of the Beretta group in accepting denominational requirement of membership in the church. The unrest eventuated in the withdrawal of the Beretta group from the church in the earlier part of 1903, and the withdrawal of Francescon and a few others later in 1903.

The two dissenting groups merged and had something in common: they were Protestant Evangelicals who believed in water baptism by immersion. This momentary rest was soon disrupted. A dissension arose among these former Presbyterian Evangelicals. The issue centered around the nature of the Sabbath and its observance. In consequence, Francescon and a few other families withdrew from the group in October 1904. In the meantime, the Lord added other souls to these evangelical Italians. Among them were those who were later used of the Lord: Marin, Gazzari,

Tosetto, Perrou, Garrou, and L. Tedeschi.¹

It was now late 1904 — some three years away from another overwhelming Gospel experience awaiting these Italian Evangelicals. That is the subject we begin in the next chapter.

NOTES

¹. The foregoing history is based on data gleaned from the testimonies of Francescon and Ottolmi.

Pentecost At Hand

*A*t the close of the preceding chapter we saw the Chicago Italo-American Evangelical Community in a fragmented condition. Nonetheless, faithfulness in worship and activity continued among them within the context of Gospel light they possessed at the time. Perhaps a constructive observation may be made from the fragmented condition of the Italian Evangelical Community during the closing months of that Community's non-Pentecostal experience.

The Italian Evangelicals in Chicago during 1904-1907, while possessing an authentic evangelical fervor, were rapidly arriving at the moment of a greater and more consuming experience in zeal and spiritual ardor. Nearing the eve of that community's spiritual climactic experience, its fragmented non-Pentecostal position seems to have related to its fast approaching Pentecostal status.

In retrospect, that fragmented situation served as a means of isolating the Italian Evangelicals of Chicago from a formal denominational context preparatory to the Pentecostal experience in 1907. A Biblical analogy seems to surface here: just as believers in the Jerusalem of Apostolic times were formally set apart by the Lord from a religious denominational setting preparatory to the outpouring of the Spirit, so Italian Evangelicals in Chicago (the Jerusalem of the Italian Pentecostal Movement) found themselves separated from a denominational setting preparatory to the outpouring of the Spirit beginning in 1907.

Just as the Lord did a work in Jerusalem independently of the religious establishment, so the Lord was about to do a work among Italian Evangelicals in Chicago independently

of all established religious denominations. Indeed, the original glory of the Italian Pentecostal Movement, beginning in 1907, was its initiation into that Biblically unique climate of divine sovereignty prophetically expressed by Zechariah: "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

Perhaps the Italian Evangelicals in Chicago, rapidly arriving at the "fullness of the time," could not dream nor suspect, that close at hand awaited a unique spiritual awakening — a revelation as it were — a coming alive for them of Biblical dimensions such as:

"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever" (John 14:16).

"But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you . . . (Acts 1:8).

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come...suddenly there came a sound...there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire...and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4).

Soon the Italian Evangelical Community in Chicago would very well cry out to the city and to other Italians who might not believe:

"Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you" (Acts 13:41).

But wait! Was there not beginning to be heard "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees"? There was! Then would the Italian Evangelicals do as the Lord said to David... "then thou shalt bestir thyself" (2 Sam. 5:24).

The "sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees" seems to have been heard by Ottolini. The time was June 1907. Beretta, who had the pastoral care of some seventy or more Italian Evangelicals, was away on a mission to Holley, New York. During his absence, the worship services were placed in the care of Menconi and Ottolini.

On a Sunday evening in June 1907, while Ottolini ministered to the group, he said in a somewhat prophetic manner: "Brothers and Sisters, in the New Testament there are things that we do not possess. What they are I cannot explain, but I am sure if someone were to tell us we would most likely contradict him." Thus Ottolini began to hear the "sound of a going...": things in the New Testament not yet possessed. One major thing was on the way, very close at hand — the baptism in the Holy Spirit!

We cannot refrain at this point: there is a Biblical analogy to which we must refer. Cornelius, leader of an "Italian band," was a devout man who offered prayers to God. One day Cornelius heard, as it were, the "sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees" — he was given a prophetic vision of sorts which he did not immediately understand. Meanwhile, the divine giver of that vision was simultaneously preparing the Apostle Peter to clarify and identify the "sound" heard by Cornelius. The rest is Biblical history. Cornelius and those with him were saved, baptized in water, and filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10).

The analogy: just as Peter was prepared by the Lord to identify the "sound" for Cornelius, so the Lord began to prepare Francescon to clarify and identify the "sound" heard by Ottolini. There would be glory in that sound. Soon the Italian Evangelicals in Chicago would begin to "bestir themselves." This stirring will be seen in the following chapter.

Pentecost At Last



At the time of the separation in the home church in Chicago in 1925, those who left the Erie Street place of worship purchased the above building located on Lincoln and Superior streets.

The reader will recall that the Pentecostal Revival in America beginning in 1900 spread to Chicago in 1906. Chicago's North Avenue Mission, pastored by W. H. Durham, was the scene of a continuing manifestation of the Holy Spirit. We also indicated previously that we would return to Pastor Durham and the Mission after tracing events among Italo-Americans in Chicago prior to and after the turn of the new century.

Our tracing began primarily with the years 1890, observing the movements of those Italo-Americans in Chicago comprising the Italian Evangelical Community who were led, providentially and ultimately in 1907, to Pastor Durham and the North Avenue Mission. Nearly two decades were to transpire (1890-1907) before these Italians were to possess the Pentecostal experience — indeed, almost twenty years of a period of spiritual gestation was to elapse before the birth of the Italian Pentecostal Movement.

In the foregoing chapter we observed that, as the hour of the Pentecostal experience drew near, Ottolini began to hear "sounds" of Pentecost which he could not readily identify. In the meantime, the Lord was preparing Francescon who would help identify those "sounds". Through the witness of Francescon, the Italian Evangelical Community would be introduced to the North Avenue Mission and to the experience of the Holy Spirit baptism. The Chicago became, in 1907, the Jerusalem of the Italian Pentecostal Movement.

The final and immediate chronological setting in which the Movement was born is shown in the testimonies of Francescon and Ottolini where we may trace the following

sequence of events:¹

1. It was the year 1907. Ottolini and those Italian Evangelicals associated with him assembled regularly in their newly acquired place of worship on Grand Avenue. Francescon and those who had seceded from the Ottolini group in 1904, continued to meet in alternate places "breaking bread in memory of the Lord's passion."

2. In late April 1907, Francescon witnessed an open-air service wherein an anonymous individual testified to having received the promise of the Spirit, speaking with other tongues. Francescon learned from this person that, at the North Avenue Mission, this experience in the Holy Spirit was taught and encouraged. Francescon says in his testimony: "One week I visited them (the North Avenue Mission) alone and the Lord assured me that this was indeed the work of His hands. The following Sunday the others of our group went with me."

We gather from available sources that Francescon and his group continued to pursue a greater interest in the operations of the Holy Spirit. A phenomenal experience is recorded by Francescon: by July and August 1907, two women in his group were baptized in the Spirit — Sister Francescon, who spoke in the Swedish tongue, and Sister DiCicco, who spoke in the Chinese language. Francescon further testifies: "On the 25th of August it pleased our Lord to confer a like gift to me."

During the time this group waited on the Lord at the North Avenue Mission, presumably during the summer of 1907, Pastor Durham was shown by the Lord that Francescon had been divinely set apart "to carry His message to the Italian people."

3. The reader will recall that in June 1907, Ottolini had spoken to his people about experiences in the New Testament which they had not yet possessed. While Ottolini wrestled with this inexplicable conviction during that summer, the Lord had prepared Francescon, as already seen, to witness to Ottolini on those advance matters of the Holy Spirit found in the New Testament.

4. On August 24, 1907, while working with Ottolini (Francescon and Ottolini were adept in the art of mosaics),

Francescon shared with him the news of the Holy Spirit experience he and his group had been having at the North Avenue Mission. One week later, on August 31, while both men were walking home from their place of employment, Ottolini invited Francescon to enter his home where Francescon witnessed to Ottolini's wife on the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Ottolinis were deeply impressed with Francescon's testimony and his prayer which was offered with a great manifestation of power. Ottolini says about Francescon at that time: "There was in him a radical change which constrained us to say indeed this is no longer Francescon, the man we knew as a Protestant."

On that same evening Ottolini attended the service at the North Avenue Mission where he saw verified Francescon's testimony on the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Thus Ottolini began to understand the "sounds" of the Spirit which were not clear to him during those recent weeks.

5. On Sunday, September 1, 1907, Ottolini appeared before the congregation of Italian Evangelicals where he served as Elder. He witnessed to them of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit at the North Avenue Mission. He indicated to his people that he would absent himself from them until he received the infilling of the Spirit, an experience he intended to pursue, believing it to be essential to an advance in his ministry.

As had been anticipated, some dissension and opposition arose over Ottolini's witness on the Holy Spirit. However, the work of the Lord was not to be impeded. Menconi, a co-Elder with Ottolini among the Italian Evangelicals, agreed to attend the service that same evening (September 1) at the North Avenue Mission where Menconi was persuaded of the genuineness of the Holy Spirit manifestations.

6. On September 9, Ottolini's hunger for the Spirit was satisfied when he was baptized in the Spirit in his own bedroom. On the following day his wife was also filled with the Spirit. Ottolini continued to attend services at the North Avenue Mission where his insatiable thirst for the things of the Spirit found satisfaction. Meanwhile, the Italian Evangelicals were left without the services of their Elder, Pietro Ottolini.

In the book of Proverbs is found a description of a virtuous woman. It is said she is one whose husband implicitly trusts: "She openeth her mouth with wisdom and in her tongue is the law of kindness" (Prov. 31:10-31). Such must have been the wife of Ottolini. She became concerned over the pastoral needs of the Italian Evangelicals — she could visualize them becoming discouraged and perhaps falling into disarray due to her husband's absence from them.

7. On the evening of September 13, Sister Ottolini shared her deep feelings with her husband as he was preparing to attend the service at the North Avenue Mission. Her words influenced him immediately. After prayer over this matter, Ottolini gave serious thought to his responsibility as Elder among the Italian Evangelicals. Rather than attending the service at North Avenue Mission, Ottolini, moved by conviction and compassion, attended the service of the Italian Evangelicals on that same evening (September 13).

During that service Ottolini testified of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit at the North Avenue Mission. He witnessed to the baptism in the Spirit he and his wife had received. While Ottolini spoke, Giovanni Perrou was moved by inspiration to declare: "The Lord is in our midst." There followed a most obvious manifestation of the divine presence throughout the Mission. Thus Ottolini's testimony was received with wide approval at the Grand Avenue Mission, home of the Italian Evangelicals. At the close of that service, Ottolini invited them to attend the service at North Avenue on the following evening.

8. On Saturday, September 14, Ottolini and others attended the service at the North Avenue Mission. Perrou was baptized in the Spirit that evening in surroundings of great Holy Spirit manifestations lasting until 2 a.m., Sunday morning.

9. On Sunday morning, September 15, during the service of the Italian Evangelicals, the unusual and the extraordinary took place. Ottolini describes that Sunday as a "day of sacred memory." Perrou, having been filled with the Spirit some hours before, offered prayer. Suddenly the power of God fell among the Italian Evangelicals and a number of them were baptized in the Holy Spirit. The Italian Evangelicals were getting more New Testament experiences. They were seeing

a work being done, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord!

Upon seeing the prolonged unusual manifestation of the Holy Spirit (it was nearly 12 noon), Ottolini sent for Francescon. The reader will remember that Francescon and his group had separated themselves from these Italian Evangelicals some three years before. However, the Lord has a way of uniting His people through prodigious manifestations of His Spirit.

The message sent to Francescon was: "The Lord wants you to be in our midst." Francescon was not at home when the message was delivered. However, upon his return home he read the note left at his house. Accepting the invitation, Francescon arrived at the Grand Avenue Mission about 2 p.m. on that memorable day, Sunday, September 15. He found many of the Italian Evangelicals under the influence of the Spirit, while some had been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

During a third service held on that day, Ottolini testifies to have spoken by inspiration, saying: "The Lord has sent Brother Francescon here so that we can hear the Word of God through him..." Francescon, overwhelmed with power, declared: "Now I know that the Lord has spoken through Brother Ottolini." He then advanced to the podium and released a powerful sermon by which all were made to realize that the Lord had spoken.

In those days Francescon and Ottolini went about witnessing to Italian people, pointing out to them the work of the Holy Spirit. The Lord worked in homes and, in a short while, the Mission on Grand Avenue was filled with believers. Mighty operations of the Spirit were done in the name of Jesus, believers also being baptized in the Spirit. The services at the Grand Avenue Mission were in the care of Ottolini and Francescon; Ottolini presided and Francescon ministered the Word of God.

At last Pentecost came to Chicago's Italian people. The day of September 15, 1907 may be seen as a pivotal day — indeed a climactic day, in the history of the Italian Evangelical Community in Chicago. Ottolini describes that day as being a day of "sacred memory." Francescon describes it as "the unforgettable 15th of September..." That was the day the Lord had made; Italian Evangelicals

rejoiced and were glad in it. September 15, 1907 may, in a very practical sense, be said to be the day in which the Italian Pentecostal Movement was born!

The infant Movement began to breathe the air of its new Holy Spirit environment. The glory of those early days will be briefly noted in the following chapter.

NOTES

1. Taken from Franceson's Autobiographical Monograph and The Life and Mission of Pietro Ottolini.

10

The Glory of Those Days

*T*he fullness of the time" for the birth of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in the United States arrived on September 15, 1907. The new movement emerged from the evangelical womb. The umbilical cord connecting the nascent movement with its evangelical placenta was severed. A new Holy Ghost baptized movement took its place in the annals of 20th century church history. The cries of praise were heard from the infant movement destined to grow and expand beyond the borders of its Chicago confines. From this movement was due to evolve the Christian Church of North America.

In one sense, the writing of this chapter may be doing a disservice to the Italian Pentecostal Movement, especially to the early years of that movement. There is much that will be omitted in terms of an attempt to demonstrate the glory of those days. The reason for the omission has already been stated in the Prologue where we indicated that, for one thing, the modesty of the most prominent fathers in the movement did not permit them to record the many magnanimous operations of the Holy Spirit. We can only rely upon whatever meager data is available to us in our attempt to review the glory of those days.

Perhaps we can begin a recounting of those glorious days by selecting an analogy from the Acts of the Apostles where we find the phrase "and in those days" (see for example Acts 1:15 and 6:1). The writer of the Acts undoubtedly refers to a point in time immediately preceding (1:15) and following (6:1) the day of Pentecost.

The days immediately preceding Pentecost were days of

anticipation. The glory of those pre-Pentecost days was limited to the expectation of a promise to be fulfilled. The disciples anticipated the promise of the Spirit given by Jesus. The days immediately following Pentecost were days of fulfillment. Then the glory became greater because the glory in the fulfillment of the promise of the Spirit is always greater than the glory in the anticipation of its fulfillment.

The part of this analogy which speaks of the glory in the fulfillment is most applicable to the early years of the Italian Pentecostal Movement. Whether by coincident, accident, inspiration, or otherwise, it is most striking to observe that Ottolini refers to the days immediately following September 15, 1907 as "those days." Taking our cue from the use of this phrase in the Bible and in Ottolini's testimony, we shall begin our brief review of the glory of "those days" of the early Italian Pentecostal Movement.

The glory of those days is given a prominent place by Stanley H. Frodsham in his book "With Signs Following." Frodsham quotes a descriptive testimony of the early Italian Pentecostal Movement given by W. H. Durham, pastor of the then North Avenue Mission. In his referral to Italian Pentecostals in "those days" Durham says: "They were a praying band who had separated themselves unto the Lord a few years before, and had been meeting in their homes. They had long felt the need of power and when they heard of the work here they came to see about it, never having heard of such a thing before. The first night they came the Lord convinced them the work was of Him and they at once became seekers. Soon the Lord began to baptize them in the Holy Ghost. It was wonderful to see the degree of power He put on some of them, and blessed to hear them speak in tongues and sing in the Spirit...They were filled with the Spirit, and with faith and power." (Page 54)

Durham then moves on to refer to the Italian brethren as having their own mission where the Gospel was preached in the Italian language. Undoubtedly, this is a reference to the Grand Avenue Mission where Francescon and Ottolini were reunited as observed in the previous chapter.

Frodsham continues to quote Durham's description of the glory of "those days" of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in Chicago. He says: "Soon they began to send out evangelists

and missionaries, and have kept this up till they have practically spread this Gospel throughout the Italian population of America. Today Brother Francescon and a company of workers are in South America preaching the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ among the Italian Catholics and others. Hundreds of this nationality have been converted and baptized in water and in the Holy Ghost, and still the work goes on. Roman Catholics have been saved in large numbers. I never saw greater evidences of the transforming grace of Jesus Christ than among these dear people. (Pages 54-55)

In his testimony the late Ottolini offers a description of the glory of "those days": "The blessings of those days were innumerable and neither could one chronologically register the baptized. One thing could be said — it seemed as though the day of Pentecost had reappeared and Chicago had become the center of His divine work which was destined to bring special blessings to the Italian people.

"In those days there was no work available in our trade (mosaic), so Francescon and I took advantage of the situation and brought our testimony to people of our acquaintance who had the Bible, but were not aware of the real work of God. The Lord bestowed great blessings in the homes we visited. In a short period of time the place of worship became crowded with new believers. Miracles were performed in the name of Jesus. Persons afflicted with tuberculosis and other ailments were restored to perfect health instantly. All in all there was love in the hearts of the people and gratitude toward the Lord." (Page 9)

The glory of "those days" is attested to by Sister Mary Toso of Niagara Falls, New York, originally of Chicago, whose husband, M. Toso, was one of the early leaders in the movement. An octogenarian still enjoying good health, Sister Toso has placed her witness of those days in writing.¹ We quote the following excerpts from her testimony:

"Touched with the message of the Gospel and the repeated visits of Brother Beretta to the home, I was prompted to take courage and attend the mission service. On February 12, 1911, I entered the mission for the very first time." Sister Toso undoubtedly refers to the Grand Avenue Mission

where the Italian Pentecostal Movement was born some four years before. She continues:

"The mission was packed, about 200 people were there worshipping the Lord. My first impressions were naturally impressions of wonder and not a little of fear too. It was difficult to concentrate on meditation. It was noisy with a continued undertone of praise and thankfulness that was difficult for me to comprehend at the time.

"Services were held each night in the week and three times on Sunday... There were those who always remained after the services to tarry for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. I attended the services every night of the week that followed my water baptism and I, too, sought the infilling of the Spirit." Sister Tosetto received her baptism in the Spirit on June 7, 1911 — an unforgettable "very hot, sultry evening."

The point to be made from Sister Tosetto's testimony is that four years after the birth of the new movement there was still evident the glory of the Lord: Souls were being saved and filled with the Spirit; believers were still attracted to services held every night of the week and three times on Sundays. Those were still days of a continuing manifestation of the Holy Spirit and the glory of the Lord in the midst of His people.

Those who may recall the early years of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in Chicago (persons such as Sister Tosetto and Brother Dell'Aringa) can witness to the ecstasy and praise created in the hearts of those pioneers who, through experience, were brought to the full realization of the Spirit-filled life and the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Their tongues became as "the pen of a ready writer." They offered instant vocal praises to God for the awareness of the position in Christ to which they had been advanced by divine grace and mercy.

In "those days" Pentecostal Italians sought to have an experience revealing a close Biblical affinity. They believed "the testimony of Christ was confirmed in them" (1 Cor. 1:6); they sought to "come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:7); they believed in "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:25); they offered up "spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15); showing forth "the praises of him who hath called you

out of darkness in "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). These are just a few of the Biblical affinities which, for them, reflected the glory of the Lord, and for which they manifested an abundant zeal.

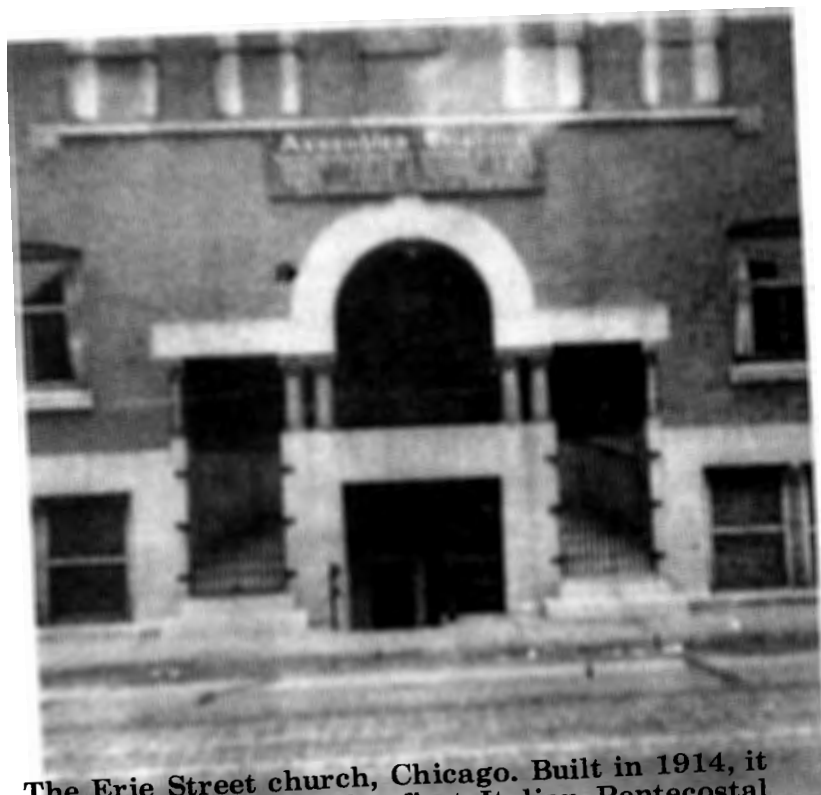
Perhaps the spiritual mood of "those days" may be best expressed in the words of the prophet Jeremiah:

"Thus saith the Lord Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord" (9:23-24).

NOTES

¹. Sister Tosetto's testimony was gathered by her son-in-law, Alfred Palma.

Apostolic Similarities



The Erie Street church, Chicago. Built in 1914, it became the home of the first Italian Pentecostal Church after relocation from the Grand Avenue Mission.

*I*n reading the testimonies of the founding fathers of the Italian Pentecostal Movement, one cannot help but feel that those fathers possessed a true sense of affinity with the believers of the New Testament apostolic church. What is more, one begins to discern similarities between some events taking place in Chicago during the early days of the Italian Pentecostal Movement and those events taking place in the Jerusalem church after the day of Pentecost.

Those similarities were obvious to the fathers who saw and heard what the Lord did in those days. In fact, Ottolini makes a relevant comment on those similarities in his testimony:

“One thing could be said: it seemed as though the day of Pentecost had reappeared and Chicago had become the center of His divine work which was destined to bring special blessings to the Italian people.”

Some of the experiences during the early years of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in Chicago bore a marked resemblance to the experiences of the early church in Jerusalem. This is not an attempt at exaggeration. It is simply to state that the extraordinary events evidenced in those early years of the movement gave rise to a sense of the presence of the ineffable.

While the historical and physical setting of the apostolic church was not the same in Chicago, the Christological setting and background of the apostolic similarities in Chicago were the same: “Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

The apostolic similarities evidenced in the testimonies of

the founding fathers of the Italian Pentecostal Movement may be observed in a number of experiential areas:

1. **The similarity in the cultural and spiritual background of the men in leadership.** During the incident of the first recorded persecution against the apostles, the Scriptures record the Jewish Council's evaluation of the Apostles Peter and John: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled: and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

It was readily obvious to the Jewish Council that Peter and John had not been formally trained in theological and rabbinical schools. Yet they were capable of sustaining a theological disputation with the highest court in their nation. How was this possible?

The answer was again obvious to those judges: Peter and John had been companions of Jesus — the One who had **not** sat at the feet of any eminent rabbi — yet Jesus taught as one having authority (Matt. 7:28-29; John 7:14-15). The conclusion was that Jesus must have imparted His charisma to those "unlearned and ignorant men."

In his testimony, Ottolini attributes the success of the Italian Pentecostal Movement to the "greatness of our Lord." Concerning its early leaders he says:

"From nothing He (the Lord) called to existence a miraculous work, and chose **men of elementary culture such as we**, upon whom to bestow such a high ministry for the propagation of the Gospel of His kingdom to the world. In these things we do realize that it was not our ability, but the blessed sanction of the Holy Spirit whom God sent in these earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." (Pages 26-27).

In terms of apostolic similarities, the reader will observe that Ottolini refers to the leadership in the early Italian Pentecostal Movement as being made up of "men of elementary culture." They were men who, like Peter and John, were basically literate, but who had not been formally trained in seminaries. This is what is implied in the term, "men of elementary culture." Indeed, they were men who had been with Christ: they knew their Lord in a personal manner,

having had an overwhelming experience in the "Sanction of the Holy Spirit."

The point to be made in the demonstration of this similarity is that just as the Lord founded the church in Jerusalem, employing men who were not rabbinically trained members of the traditional religious establishment, so also, when the Lord founded the Italian Pentecostal Movement He did not utilize men who were institutionally trained in traditional religious establishments.

2. **The similarity in social ostracism.** The apostles and the early church suffered persecutions at the hands of Jewish leadership. One may read the account of those persecutions in Scriptures such as Acts 4:1-3, 17-18, 21; 5:1-15; 8:1.

Francescon makes the following comment in his testimony: "And the Lord suffered that we be proved by many cruel persecutions, but not one of our number weakened for that the grace of God abounded in our hearts and we knew that God ever keeps faith." These words are a re-echoing of the apostolic spirit under the fire of persecution: "But Peter and John answered and said unto them; whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20).

Again we might say in relation to persecutions that while the background of the persecutions surrounding the early Italian Pentecostal Movement was not necessarily similar to that surrounding the persecutions of the Jerusalem church, the spirit of a hostile environment was nonetheless very similar. All too frequently, religious leaders in the community fired the persecution directed against Italian Pentecostals.

3. **The similarity in prophetic utterances.** In the early apostolic church there were utterances inspired by the Holy Spirit predictive of a future event which would affect believers in some manner. For example in Acts 11:27-28, we read:

"And in those days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar." That this fulfilled prophecy did affect

believers is seen in the determination of the disciples to send relief to the believers in Judea (Acts 11:29-30).

It is most interesting to observe something similar to the above in the testimony of Francescon. We quote verbatim from that testimony, page 9:

"The month of April (1908) the Lord foretold many happenings and the fulfillment of one of those prophecies was this: a brother, having given his testimony spoke in a strange tongue and sat down; then one of our sisters, having the gift of interpretation, rose and said: 'The Lord makes known today through the mouth of our brother that the saints in Italy shall be persecuted in the reign of Victor Emanuel III' (observe that when this prophecy was made, the testimony of this work had not yet reached Italy). Now all this prophecy was fulfilled to the letter in 1936. By order of the Italian government all meeting places of our brothers were closed and it was forbidden them to meet anywhere, and those who were surprised at meetings were fined and imprisoned; their sole transgression being that they had served God according to apostolic teachings."

No comment need be made on the above similarity except to repeat that while the historical backgrounds of both were not identical, the apostolic spirit of prophecy was similar.

4. **The similarity in the experience of miracles.** The book of Acts is replete with accounts of healings and miracles taking place in apostolic times. For example see Acts 5:12-16. In the early years of the Italian Pentecostal Movement there were definite experiences of miracles and healings.

Francescon testifies to the following: "From September 15, to the end of December 1907, the Lord worked wondrous cures upon long standing illnesses whose nature was past man's knowing or help — and four of those sick were: G. Lombardi, P. DeStefano, Lucia Menna, and Fidalma Andreoni."

Ottolini testifies: "Miracles were performed in the name of Jesus. Persons afflicted with tuberculosis and other ailments were restored to perfect health instantly."¹

Again, while the historical setting to the experience of miracles in the early Italian Pentecostal Movement was not the same as that of the miracles the Lord performed in apostolic times, the background of Holy Spirit operation was

essentially the same: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord." Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, today, and forever!

NOTES

¹. The quotations from Francescon and Ottolini cited in this chapter are taken from Francescon's *Autobiographical Monograph* and *The Life and Mission of Pietro Ottolini*.

The Spreading Flame

*B*efore proceeding we will again review pertinent highlights of the historical background of the Italian Pentecostal Movement. Prior to the founding of this movement on September 15, 1907, there were three Italian Evangelical groups in Chicago. THEY WERE: the Italian Presbyterians, the group pastored by Ottolini, and the smaller group led by Francescon. The latter two groups had seceded from the Italian Presbyterian Church prior to 1907.

Francescon was the first to receive the witness of the Holy Spirit baptism. He communicated this witness to his group and to Ottolini who, in turn, conveyed this witness to the congregation under his care. We recall how the Francescon group was reunited with the Ottolini group in consequence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

It must also be pointed out that when the outpouring of the Spirit upon Italians took place in Chicago there were among them some Italians who were yet Presbyterians. At the time of the great outpouring of the Spirit they had not yet officially left the Presbyterian Church as Francescon, Ottolini, and their groups had done some years before.

The total picture is this: when the Spirit was poured out on Italians in Chicago in 1907, a merger took place. Some Italian Presbyterians, together with their former Presbyterian friends — the Ottolini and Francescon groups — amalgamated in consequence of their new-found glorious affinity with the Holy Spirit.

The amalgamation of Spirit-filled Italians in Chicago in 1907 became historically the first Italian Pentecostal Church — indeed the very beginning of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in the United States. This new Pentecostal community worshiped in the Grand Avenue Mission, and in

the words of the late Michael Palma, "united themselves in one mind and one accord."

This new movement had Chicago as its Jerusalem. Here we may add the words of Ottolini: "And from the church of Chicago came the first testimony to the Italian people." The flame of the Holy Spirit burned first among Italians in Chicago, and soon began to spread among Italians elsewhere in the United States. Of this spreading flame Ottolini says with much emotion and enthusiasm:

"I rejoiced in the Lord, seeing how the work of God was progressing with great rapidity." Again he states: "It was amazing to see how the Pentecostal work among the Italians was rapidly spreading. In fact, in every major city in the United States there was a representation." (*Life and Mission of Ottolini*, pages 9 and 20.)

Any attempt to write on this spreading flame will immediately fall short of the best intention because historical data is very limited. The founding fathers did not see fit (as noted in the Prologue) to record in detail the work of the Holy Spirit among Italians in the United States.

In 1942 Francescon had published a short autobiographical sketch combined with a condensed testimony of the Lord's work among Italian people beginning in Chicago and spreading throughout the nation. In that writing Francescon candidly and modestly confessed "not having kept any kind of diary or yearbook, or any record of the glorious missions which the Blessed One called me to undertake..."

In spite of limited historical data we shall proceed to review the spreading flame as best we can from brief testimonies at our disposal. It is difficult to construct a thoroughly and chronologically accurate account of the spreading flame from limited and sometimes vague sources. Nonetheless, an honest effort will be made from available sources.

We shall begin by referring to a New Testament passage, the words of Jesus to His disciples: "...repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). Here we observe home base: "beginning at Jerusalem." We also observe the spreading flame: "among all nations."

From the above we may draw an analogy applicable to the Italian Pentecostal Movement. Home base: beginning at Chicago. The spreading flame: in the words of Ottolini, "in every major city in the United States there was a representation," as well as missions work abroad. This analogy seems to find substance in a prophetic utterance by Francescon in December 1907, the closing month of the year in which the movement was founded:

"I the Lord have established my name in this place (Grand Avenue Mission); if ye hearken unto me and show yourselves humble I will send among you those whom I am determined to save, which state shall continue for a time, after which I shall send certain of you to gather in others of my sheep. And this is the token by which ye shall know that it is I the Lord who have spoken; namely, this place shall be too small to hold, by reason of their numbers, those whom I shall send hither."

In this utterance by Francescon is a specific reference to the spreading flame beginning at Chicago, the home base: "I will send among you those whom I am determined to save..." The spreading flame is also clearly observable in terms of missions at home and abroad: "I shall send certain of you to gather in others of my sheep."

With the above background before us we shall begin observing the spreading flame first in Chicago, then elsewhere in the United States and abroad.

1. Beginning at Chicago. In his autobiographical sketch Francescon offers a good witness to the flame of the Spirit spreading among local Italians. Following the prophetic utterance quoted above, Francescon says: "Soon after this prophecy, one of the brethren decided to buy sixty seats to add to those which we already had." Evidently, an anonymous brother, believing the Lord had spoken, acted in faith and purchased additional seats to be placed in the Grand Avenue Mission.

Continuing in his testimony, Francescon shows the spreading flame enveloping the first Italian Pentecostal Mission. We quote Francescon verbatim:

"In those days the Lord had set to work upon brothers Giacomo Lombardi and Giovanni Rossi, and certain whole families, members of the Italian Presbyterian Church, as

well as some belonging to the Catholic Church; and among these was Brother Luigi Terragnoli. The Sunday following the prophecy, all the seats were filled and some few persons were constrained to remain standing. A baptismal service was held for these the beginning of January 1908, and close to seventy obeyed the Lord's commandment, many of whom were sealed with the Promise." (Francescon's Testimony, page 8.)

The above quotation is the genuine testimony of the first Italian in the United States to communicate the truth of the Holy Spirit baptism to his fellow Italo-Americans. Indeed, Francescon holds a unique position in the history of the Italian Pentecostal Movement. This quotation from Francescon demonstrates the spreading of the flame of the Spirit among the Italians in Chicago at the beginning of the movement.

2. The spreading flame throughout the United States. The limited data made available records very little information on the spread of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in the United States. In fact, the testimonies of Francescon and Ottolini, so widely referred to, make what seems to us to be only a passing reference to the movement in the United States, although Ottolini offers a more detailed history on the work in St. Louis, Missouri, where the Lord led him and blessed that work gloriously.

The main source of information at this point is a fourteen page mimeographed broadside prepared in 1968 by the late Frank Maruso, a long-time overseer and leader in the Christian Church of North America. While Maruso's writing is also limited, it does offer a satisfactory overview of the movement spreading across the United States after its inception in Chicago. From our available sources we follow the trail of the spreading flame in America.

The trail of the spreading flame is traced to the Grand Avenue Mission in Chicago. The first one to leave that mission was Sister Francescon who, in October 1907, visited the Moles family in Los Angeles, California. Several in that city were filled with the Spirit, and as a result the movement reached across the nation from Chicago to Los Angeles where it was destined to spread among Italians in California.

In December 1907 Ottolini went to Holley, New York, where Beretta had been evangelizing for two years. Within three weeks, forty-three souls were filled with the Spirit. Thus the movement reached the area of western New York.

In February 1908 Ottolini and Perrou felt led to go to New York City where a number of believers were gathered. Silvio Margadonna received his Spirit baptism and remained a long-time leader and pastor in that city. Thus the flame spread to the eastern part of the state of New York.

In April 1908 Ottolini and Perrou undertook a home missions thrust in St. Louis, Missouri. One must read "The Life and Mission of Pietro Ottolini" in order to appreciate the miraculous work the Lord accomplished in St. Louis through the faith and perseverance of Ottolini. Thus the movement spread to the state of Missouri.

Francescon was led by the Lord to Philadelphia in April 1909 where Italians were saved, among whom was Giovanni Marcucci. Later Marcucci became the pastor of that work. Thus the movement spread to the largest city in Pennsylvania.

Late in 1915 Maximilian Tosetto left the Chicago church to go to areas of western New York State. He was finally led to Niagara Falls in 1916 where he became the first pastor of a rapidly mushrooming work of the Holy Spirit. Thus by 1916 the movement had spread to the principal cities of western New York State.

Again from the Grand Avenue Mission in Chicago the Lord sent out other servants. Salvatore Cutrona brought the Word of the Lord to souls in Mississippi and Arkansas. Joseph Lanza brought the Gospel message to Italians in Mississippi, Tennessee, and Louisiana. Later, Lanza served as the second pastor of the large Italian Pentecostal Church in Boston, Massachusetts, where he remained as pastor for some forty years.

In 1916 Giulio Dell'Aringa, having been well trained under the pastoral ministry of Pietro Menconi at the Chicago church, went to Rochester, New York. In a short time some souls were converted to Christ and began to hold public worship. This was the origin of the Italian Pentecostal work in Rochester, New York. Thus the spreading flame moved to areas of upstate New York.

In 1916 Joseph Bongiorno of Erie, Pennsylvania, journeyed to Los Angeles, California. While there he was saved, filled with the Spirit and healed. He communicated his experience to his brother Mario in Erie who, in turn, witnessed to Italians willing to accept Christ and water baptism. From the Chicago church arrived Umberto Gazzari who baptized these believers in Erie. Thus the burning flame spread to Erie and northwestern Pennsylvania.

Michael Palma went to Syracuse, New York, in May 1920 where he assumed the pastorate of the large Italian Assembly. He remained as pastor there until 1957. He was succeeded by his son Alfred in 1958.

In 1920 Mario Bongiorno was led of the Lord to California where he pioneered the church in San Jose and where he yet remains as pastor. Thus the burning flame spread to more northern areas of California.

The burning flame began spreading through areas of western Pennsylvania. In 1923, Nancy Damato of Ellwood City, visited in Erie where she was saved, baptized and healed. Upon her return to Ellwood City she witnessed to her husband and others. Frank Damato became a firebrand for the Lord after his baptism in the Holy Spirit and was used of the Lord in the Beaver Valley of western Pennsylvania. He was also a long-time overseer in the Northwestern District of the Christian Church of North America.

By the mid 1920's and later, the spreading flame reached Italians in the tri-state area of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia. Thomas Tedeschi pioneered the work in Fairmont and Clarksburg, West Virginia. Frank Maruso pioneered the large assembly in New Castle, Pennsylvania. The flame spread into other western Pennsylvania communities such as Beaver Falls, New Brighton, Canonsburg, Washington, Farrell, Meadville, and Greenville; into Ohio communities such as Canton, Akron, Youngstown and Cleveland.

Peter Dell'Aringa — saved in 1904 — one of the early pioneer members of the Chicago church worked for the Lord in West Philadelphia, Bristol, and Reading, Pennsylvania, and founded the churches in Malaga and Glassboro, New Jersey. In 1940 he founded the Pine Grove Camp in Malaga. Thus the flame spread among Italians in eastern Pennsylvania and the state of New Jersey.

In 1926 Giovanni Saglimbene did pioneer work among Italians in the Detroit area where he founded the first Italian Pentecostal Church. By 1928 he was joined by Cosimo Caruso who pastored a work in Detroit for many years. The work spread to other areas surrounding Detroit.

There are other areas of the United States where Italians heard the Gospel during those past years of the spreading flame. Mention must be made of areas such as Des Moines, Iowa; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Omaha, Nebraska; Salt Lake City, Utah; Denver, Colorado; areas of Arizona; Baltimore, Maryland; and areas of Florida.

In review: the Gospel flame spreading among Italians throughout the United States began to burn in Chicago at the Grand Avenue Mission — the home of the Italian Pentecostal Movement. Within a period of some twenty years or more, beginning at 1907, the flame of the Gospel of Jesus Christ spread among Italians in the states of Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Missouri, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Utah, Wisconsin, and West Virginia.

The above observations on the spreading flame throughout the United States constitute a brief overview made from limited recorded sources. We close this section on the spreading flame by underscoring the following points:

a. The story of the founding of every local church in the history of the Italian Pentecostal Movement does not fall under the purview of this writing. The writing of the history of each local Assembly entails enormous study and research and can best be done at the local church level.

Undoubtedly, in every locality the souls of new believers were ignited by the flame of the Spirit. They, in turn, spread the witness to others. Only eternity will reveal the identity of the anonymous heroes of the faith who, at the local level, witnessed faithfully for their Lord. This is how the movement expanded from one locality to another in the United States.

b. Although the spreading flame reached all of the states mentioned above, there is no overwhelming evidence to show that the testimony in all of these states flourished. For

example, we mention the states of Iowa, Nebraska, Mississippi, and Louisiana. There may be evidence of Italians having been evangelized in those states; however, there exist no local churches as a monument to the Italian Pentecostal Movement.

c. In contrast with the above, there is evidence pointing to the fact that the spreading flame did flourish in other states. Those who are acquainted with the Christian Church of North America see clearly where the Italian Pentecostal Movement took root in the past.

There are local churches affiliated with the Christian Church of North America in the states of California, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Florida, Maryland, and Arkansas. These affiliated churches are, with few exceptions, products of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in the United States. In addition, there are other local churches in the United States, products of the Italian Pentecostal Movement, which remain denominationally independent and unaffiliated. Some have affiliated with the Assemblies of God in the United States.

3. The spreading flame reaches areas outside of the United States. During the early years of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in the United States, the Lord moved a few of the pioneer fathers to mission fields abroad. This leading was followed obediently because it accorded with the "among all nations" dimension of world evangelization announced by Jesus.

Another dimension to the obedience of those pioneer fathers in evangelizing abroad was the compassion and burden they possessed for people of their own national background. They loved Italians, and to them they went zealously, presenting the treasure of the Gospel carried "in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4:6-7). Thus the spreading flame moved to regions beyond the borders of the United States. The principal foreign mission fields reached by the flame issuing from Chicago in those early years were Italy, Brazil, and Argentina.

Before reviewing that missionary activity it might be well to observe the immediate surroundings of those leadings to the foreign field. Francescon describes the courage and

boldness of those fathers: "...not compromising their divine calling for human ends, nor fearing what mortal man may do unto them, nor yet weakening before enticements or fear of the enemy."

In matters of economics and the leading of the pioneer fathers to the mission field, Ottolini says of himself before departing for Italy in 1910: "Eight persons (his immediate family), no bank account, and without a public collection, yet the Lord provided what was necessary for all of us." These quotations are representative of the dominant attitude possessing the missionary fathers in the early Italian Pentecostal Movement.

Attention will be now focused on the two principal foreign mission fields reached by the spreading flame emanating from Chicago in the early years of the Italian Pentecostal Movement — Italy and Brazil.

a. **Italy.** It was the year 1908. The reigning monarch was Victor Emanuel III who had succeeded to the throne following the assassination of his father Humbert I in July 1900. Later, in 1936, Pentecostal believers in Italy were to be persecuted under Emanuel's reign as was revealed in a prophetic utterance given in the Chicago church some twenty-five years before.

In 1908 there was no Pentecostal Movement in Italy. There were some Protestant religious bodies in existence, but in the extreme minority; the Roman Catholic Church being the dominant religious body, as it remains even today. However, by 1908 the burning flame of the Spirit began to move toward that Italian peninsula. Soon the Pentecostal revival would move into Italy. Indeed, the movement would eventually undergo a severe persecution. Places of worship were to be closed; holding of public worship was to be prohibited; fines and imprisonments were to be sustained by those who would ignore and resist government suppression. However, this same persecuted movement would also be a major beneficiary of a new legacy of religious freedom finally realized in Italy after World War II.

The origin of the Pentecostal movement in Italy is traced by Roberto Bracco, one of the present leaders of that movement. Bracco has written a brief paperback titled "Il Risveglio Pentecostale In Italia" (The Pentecostal Revival

in Italy). He provides a most interesting account of the origin of the movement. Quotations from Bracco's work will be given in a free translation from Italian into English.

Bracco correctly traces the origin of the Pentecostal movement in Italy to the Pentecostal revival in the United States in 1900. He follows that revival to Chicago and the origin of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in America in 1907. Then Bracco makes a pertinent observation concerning the first Italian Pentecostal Church in Chicago:

"This community was the church from which sprung all missionary initiatives destined to bring the Gospel message to Italians — from this new community in Chicago arrived in 1908 the Christian Gospel to our nation." (Page 8)

Bracco is most specific and clear as to the origin of the movement in Italy. He says: "Toward the close of 1908 began the missionary activity, willed by the Lord, which finally gave birth to the Italian Pentecostal revival in our nation. The Holy Spirit called Brother Giacomo Lombardi to assume the responsibility of this noble mission." (Page 9)

Continuing on Lombardi's mission, Bracco says: "Arriving in Rome, Brother Lombardi introduced himself to the Protestant community, thinking that the Lord would begin the Pentecostal revival among those who supposedly had knowledge of the Gospel. This expectation became a disappointment when he was greeted with hostility from the leaders of the Protestant community." (Page 10)

After some months of unsuccessful labor in witnessing, Lombardi was harshly dismissed by an evangelical pastor who obviously resented the missionary's efforts at enlightening the people of that church on Gospel truth. While Lombardi stood saddened over the threshold of the door of the church from which he had been dismissed, he heard a resounding voice within which said: "Observe that wicked one now stepping from this threshold. In a little while you will see him no more." Lombardi quickly turned to see who it was leaving the church. It was the pastor who had just dealt harshly with him. One week later that pastor died. (Page 10)

While Lombardi listened to the echoing of the voices of judgment, he heard in muted tone the words: "Follow the man who is walking ahead of you and speak to him of my name." The man, with extended arms, received Lombardi

and the Gospel message. Bracco records with pleasure the last name of the gentle old man — Sforza — the first person to receive the Pentecostal message. (Page 11)

The second Pentecostal believer was an attorney, Mauro Paretti, a member of the Torino Forum, residing at that time in Rome. Paretti was attracted by the warm and vibrant presentation of the Gospel by Lombardi. Almost immediately Paretti sought out an old friend, Michele DiNapoli, a deacon in a Protestant church who had been dissatisfied with the low level spirituality in his church. After hearing the vibrant message proclaimed by Lombardi, DiNapoli became the third person in Italy to accept the Pentecostal message. (Page 11-12)

At this point Bracco closes his account on the origin of the Pentecostal revival in Italy with a note of glad triumph: "Finally, Italy had its own Pentecostal Pavilion. God had brought about, in our own nation, a Holy Spirit revival." (Page 11)

In the Maruso broadsheets mentioned earlier, there is found an enthusiastic comment on the origin of the Pentecostal movement in Italy. Of the Lombardi ministry involved in that work, Maruso says: "This was really the very beginning of the Holy Ghost revival in Italy which occurred in 1908." Then Maruso continues in charitable manner: "This statement does not intend to minimize the missions of many other dear brethren who also did much work in Italy about the same time or immediately after that year." (Page 6)

After 1908 other Spirit-filled Italians in the United States went to Italy to spread the good news of the Gospel to their friends and relatives. Many of these noble souls remain anonymous because no official chronicle of their labors was kept. One of the earlier fathers who labored in Italy was Ottolini, whose first mission, 1910-1914, was spent mainly in northern Italy. (See "Mission of Ottolini," pages 16-18.)

The Pentecostal movement in Italy spread rapidly, especially throughout the southern parts of the nation and in Sicily. In spite of the severe persecutions noted earlier, the flame continued to spread on that Italian peninsula. There are today some one million Pentecostal adherents in Italy. The Christian Church of North America contributed vast

sums of money in the support of missions endeavors in Italy, particularly during the years following World War II and after.

b. The second principal missionary field reached by the Holy Spirit flame emanating from Chicago is Brazil. This is the field to which the Lord led the late Luigi Francescon. Information on this great work is limited to the brief testimony left by him.

In March 1910 Francescon arrived in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where he met Vincenzo Pievani, an atheist whose home was in San Antonio de la Platina, and to whom Francescon gave the Gospel witness. Two days later, Pievani returned to his home in San Antonio, Brazil.

On April 18, 1910 Francescon was impelled by divine constraint to travel to San Antonio where his purpose and objective was to seek out Pievani. In spite of ill health, lack of funds, and inadequate mode of travel, Francescon arrived in San Antonio on April 20 after an uncomfortable journey, which included forty miles on horseback through virgin forests inhabited with jaguars and other wild animals.

Upon his arrival in San Antonio, Francescon faced another difficulty — his inability to communicate in the native language. However, the Lord miraculously opened a door of utterance. He met the wife of Pievani who, being at the window of her home, heard a voice saying: "Behold the man whom I have sent to you." This was outstanding, because while Francescon had their address he had not been expected as a guest in the Pievani home.

In San Antonio, Francescon renewed acquaintance with Pievani, met his wife, and was also introduced to Felicio Mascaro and his wife. These were all Roman Catholic Brazilians. The Lord touched the hearts of these people and some others. Francescon says: "Eleven of these people were baptized in water and confirmed with the sign of the Most High. These are the first fruits of God's handiwork in that nation." (Francescon's Testimony, pages 11-12.)

This initial missionary thrust by Francescon was immediately countered by a severe trial. Having heard of the Francescon mission and its success, a local priest, aided by his followers, conspired to have Francescon killed. However, the Lord watched over His servant and delivered him. He

remained in San Antonio until June 20, 1910.

From San Antonio, Francescon returned to Sao Paulo where the Lord opened the doors of evangelism. About twenty souls accepted the testimony of the Gospel among whom were Presbyterians, Methodists, and Roman Catholics. Nearly all of these experienced divine power, some being healed and others receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

In September 1910 Francescon left Brazil for the Panama Canal, leaving the new Brazilian believers in God's care, trusting the Lord to continue His work in that nation. Francescon returned to Brazil about nine times, and on each return he noted greater progress among the believers there.

A glance at statistics reveals how the flame of the Spirit spread throughout Brazil. The Bible Society of Brazil Magazine, January to March 1965 edition, reports that the work there, since its inception under the ministry of Francescon, had grown to more than two thousand congregations, numbering over 450,000 believers. The Lord is still prospering that work. Thus the spreading flame, issuing from Chicago, ignited Brazilians also.

In speaking of areas outside of the United States where the Gospel flame reached from the Chicago church, it is appropriate to point to the missionary effort of Peter Dell'Aringa. He was saved in 1904 in Chicago and is a witness to the Pentecostal revival in America begun among Italians in that city in 1907. Within the flaming tradition of that first Italian Pentecostal Church, Brother Dell'Aringa was led of the Lord to Tunisia, North Africa, in 1953 where the Lord used him in establishing a work in Tunis and Ben Arous.

As of today, Brother Dell'Aringa, an octogenarian not in too good health, lives in retirement in Malaga, New Jersey. However, Brother Dell'Aringa, at age 85, retains the zeal and fervor which reflect the spirit of the spreading flame ignited by the Holy Spirit among Italians in Chicago in 1907.

Before closing this chapter, mention should be made of the origin of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in Canada. Information on this history was supplied by Daniel Ippolito, pastor of the Italian Pentecostal Church in Toronto. According to research diligently made by Pastor Ippolito, the following information has been made available:

The Italian Pentecostal Movement of Canada had its origin in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1913. A Jewish Evangelist named Cohen appears to have had the privilege of leading some Presbyterian Italians to a fuller Gospel light through his Pentecostal message. Uniting in prayer, these Italian Presbyterians received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

From Hamilton the flame spread to Toronto in 1914, when Charles Pavia and Frank Rispoli of Hamilton visited the Italian community in Toronto. Evangelizing from house to house, these two witnesses brought the Pentecostal message to Toronto Italians. Toronto became a Gospel Center for Italians in southern Ontario. The spreading flame then reached Montreal in 1920 where there developed a strong work consisting of several churches.

According to the historical data made available, Pentecostal Italians in the United States were not directly involved in the origin of the sister movement in Canada. However, upon his return to the states, Evangelist Cohen informed the Italian Pentecostals there of the spreading flame among Canadian Italians. It was then that Italian Pentecostals of the Chicago church visited in Hamilton and Toronto, acquainting themselves with the new sister movement in Canada.

In keeping with the earlier comment that the story of the founding of every local church in the Italian Pentecostal Movement does not fall within the scope of this writing, no attempt will be made at writing the history of any local church among the Italian Pentecostal churches of Canada. An updated resume of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in Canada is given in the chapter "The Christian Church of North America."

13 The Christian Church Of North America

*I*t was noted in the Prologue that the Christian Church of North America relates to the Italian Pentecostal Movement. This movement is the immediate background of the Christian Church of North America, commonly known by its constituents as the CCNA.

The preceding chapters present an account of that background from which sprung the CCNA. In a real sense, the history of the Italian Pentecostal Movement is the history of the CCNA. However, observing from a larger historical perspective, it might be proper to view the Italian Pentecostal Movement as being only the antecedent background of the CCNA, because the CCNA *per se* is not all of that original movement.

Existing as an organized religious entity, the CCNA is representative of only one part, perhaps the larger part of the original Italian Pentecostal Movement. Other parts of this movement have either merged with the Assemblies of God or remain organizationally and denominationally unaffiliated.

In the process of time the CCNA gradually emerged from the Italian Pentecostal Movement. In this chapter the attempt will be made to identify certain developments within that movement which point to the gradual emergence of the CCNA. In examining data made available, there is suggested an outline — a profile — of successive time periods during which certain developments took place, followed by some course of action, each one becoming a move toward the ultimate emergence of the CCNA.

1907 — 1927

The first time period suggested to us is 1907-1927 — the

first two decades of the Italian Pentecostal Movement. In his broadsheets, the late Frank Maruso indicates that during this period "God was moving by His Spirit and revivals were being experienced in many sections of the land"; referring, of course, to the United States. (Page 12)

During this period there did not exist a General Council of the churches within the movement; there had not been adopted any form of organizational structure by the many local churches comprising the movement; nor were there any spelled-out tenets of faith, other than the doctrinal instructions given at the local level. Fellowship among the churches in the movement existed, but not on any organized or denominational level.

This simplistic form of fellowship among Italian Pentecostal churches during the period 1907-1927 would soon experience a most critical disruption. Maruso states that this serious disruption began in the year 1923, "when the Holy Ghost revival was at its peak..." The cause of the disruption was a polemical issue surrounding Acts 15:13-29 — more specifically, the issue revolved around the meaning of the phrase "it seemed good," verse 28.

This issue was a most delicate one. Those who placed a strict construction on the phrase in question believed strongly that any modified approach to the phrase would lead to a lessening of the strength of the prohibition implied in verse 29. Thus it was believed that the Word of God was being called into question; and so the controversy raged.

Those who are fifty or more years removed from the heat of that controversy may very well not understand it, and quite probably do not see the purpose that controversy served or did not serve. Be that as it may, it is most regrettable that the flame of that controversy enveloped many churches in the movement at that time, causing much dissension and division. By 1925 the controversy had irreparably divided the mother church in Chicago — a church which had experienced phenomenal growth even after its relocation from the original Grand Avenue Mission to a larger place of worship on Erie Street.

This controversy continued to trouble the Italian Pentecostal churches, spreading even to Canada and Italy. Maruso says: "By the year 1927 the problem was so serious

that the leading brethren, Francescon and Tosetto, called a General Convention in Niagara Falls, New York, to decide on proper action to be taken to stem the tide of restlessness spreading over all the churches." (Page 12)

The basic purpose of the Convention was to promote unity among the churches. This purpose was given expression in the adoption of twelve Articles of Faith; article number nine expressing the desired unity in the face of the immediate problem which prompted the calling of the conference. At this convention the delegates also agreed to have published a hymnal to be uniformly used in all the churches. The hymnal was compiled by M. Tosetto and M. Palma. It was titled "Nuovo Libro D'Inni e Salmi Spirituali."

The effectiveness of the fellowship and conference was such that the Council agreed to hold an annual convention of the Italian Pentecostal churches. The General Council would be known as the "Unorganized Italian Christian Churches of the United States."

Thus we see the profile of the first time period (1907-1927) in the history of the Italian Pentecostal churches during which a disturbing polemical setting required the formation of a General Council and its issuance of a written expression of the movement's Biblical and theological position. The Council, its name, the Articles of Faith, the hymnal, the call for an annual conference — here in embryonic form was the first thrust leading toward the eventual emergence of the CCNA.

After 1927, successive time periods which specific developments among Italian Pentecostals preceded the final emergence of the CCNA are not clearly discernible. However, from the minutes of annual conferences held by the Unorganized Italian Christian Churches we offer what may be a plausibly accurate division of other time periods leading to the eventual outgrowth of the CCNA from the Italian Pentecostal Movement.

1928-1938

A second time period may very well be the years 1928-1938. Annual conferences were held as was agreed at the 1927 convention. During these intervening years the Council continued under the title, Unorganized Italian Christian Churches, and deliberated upon such matters as hymnals,

funerals, divorce and remarriage, and children water baptism. In the meantime, those churches which disagreed with the approach toward Acts 15 adopted at the 1927 Council in Niagara Falls (Article 9, Articles of Faith) by the Unorganized Italian Christian Churches, formed their own Council by 1930.

The Council of the Unorganized Italian Christian Churches made two significant moves during the period 1928-1938. The first move was the establishment of a Missionary Fund at the 1929 conference in Brooklyn, New York—a convention which showed a great increase in participation interest. Reports of the founding of diverse new works through evangelistic efforts generated the enthusiasm needed to create a fund for missions. The churches were urged to voluntarily support the fund by forwarding two annual offerings for its sustainment. A committee of three, Maximilian Tosetto, Olympus Angelelli, and Michael Palma were elected to serve as custodians of that fund.

The second significant move was made by the Council at the 1933 conference in Chicago, Illinois. Five elders were chosen for the purpose of acting as mediators wherever a local church requested assistance in dealing with any internal problem. The five elders, also known as Overseers, were Francescon, Tosetto, Palma, Angelelli, and Emma.

It ought to be mentioned that another significant development during this period was an expressed but subdued desire to more formally organize the Council and the churches. The general sentiment at that time appears to have been against a formal organization. At least the minutes of the 1933 conference seem to indicate this:

"We shall always remember in love and in recognition that the Italian work was founded by God, free from all sects and human organization, and as such, must remain as much as is possible within our responsibility in honor of Him who founded it" (Page 1.) Thus, any concerted effort toward a more formal organization would not have been acceptable to the Council during this period.

In summarizing the developments during the period 1928-1938 the following is observable: the annual conferences

continued under the name of "Unorganized Italian Christian Churches"; a missionary fund—forerunner of the later CCNA missions fund— was established with an emphasis on missions; Elders—later to be known as General Overseers in the CCNA—were chosen to assist churches in resolving problematic situations. In all of this there is seen the embryo gradually emerging as the CCNA from the Italian Pentecostal movement.

1938-1948

A third time period during which specific developments preceded the later emergence of the CCNA may conceivably have been 1938-1948. This period was characterized by another polemical issue—the attempt to more formally organize the General Council and possibly the churches. As indicated in the previous time period, this question was present, but generally subdued. In this period the issue over organization became prominent, creating a polarization in the Council. At one end of the polemical spectrum Angelelli, Tosetto, and Palma favored organization while on the other end, Francescon passionately opposed it. His opposition is clearly expressed in a paper prepared by him in 1939:

"Let it be known by the faithful of the brotherhood in the Lord Jesus that organization in the midst of the Camp of God is an open rebellion against Him. It is a move that leads to a mundane association; limits the supreme power of God; impedes the glorification of Christ according to His Word; hinders the office work of the Holy Spirit; negates the heavenly vocation; and is a surrender to the methods of unconverted people."

It appears that at the 1938 General Council, the move toward organization received a setback. However, Council did approve a revision of its name, thereafter to be known as the **Italian Christian Church of North America**. It was also agreed that each local church be incorporated in this name under the several state laws. However, the proponents of organization did not allow the matter to rest at this point. Their continued efforts to promote organization prompted Francescon and others who sustained his position to withdraw from the Council, issuing the statement against organization as quoted above.

During the first half of this period attempts were made at

reunification, including pro and antiorganizational forces; also, those of the opposition over Acts 15 who had formed their own Council in 1930. However, there is no evidence to indicate that those attempts at reunification were successful. For one thing, the battle of polemics had undoubtedly wounded the spirits of those more directly involved. This emotional situation is probably exemplified in the words of the wise man in Proverbs (8:14) when he asks: "...but a wounded spirit who can bear!"

Brethren in the Lord very often sincerely forgive. Yet they may not successfully recover from the effects of wounds inflicted upon their spirits during times of polemical warfare. Secondly, as we shall see, the desire for organization would no longer be subdued. Thus the pace toward a more formal organization would be accelerated during this period. Under these considered circumstances, reunification remained waiting in the wings, perhaps never to be achieved.

The General Council of the Italian Christian Church of North America—whatever remained of that Council since the first conference in 1927—made three decisions during this period which directly relate to the final emergence of the CCNA:

1. At the time of the involvement of the United States in World War II, Council deleted the ethnic appellation "Italian" from its name. The immediate reason for this action was to demonstrate loyalty to the American government at a time when that government was at war with Italy, one of the axis powers. The appellation "Italian" would never be restored to the name of the Council. Thus, the Council's name would thereafter be, **The Christian Church of North America.**

The deletion of the appellation "Italian" also served other purposes. For one thing, while the employment of the Italian language in the churches at that time had not yet fallen into disuse, its use was diminishing due to the rise of a newer generation who obviously could not adequately worship in the language of their parents and grandparents.

Furthermore, there began to be manifest the awareness that the Gospel witness should be given to all people as well as to Italians. Thus the CCNA, like all other religious denominations, would inevitably become an ethnic mosaic,

comprised of committed Christians from all ethnic backgrounds.

2. A second major decision made by Council during this period was to give impetus to missions. During the earlier period, 1928-1938, Council had established a missionary fund at the 1929 conference, placing the fund in the custody of three men. These were days of the Great Depression and, in consequence, the enlargement of the missionary fund was hindered by financial scarcity at the grass-root level.

At any rate, having arrived at the 1938-1948 period, the economics of CCNA people, as well as that of all Americans, greatly improved because of American involvement in World War II. Motivated by missionary needs and the awareness of the economic improvement of the people in the CCNA, the Council deliberated upon an improved program for missions.

In 1943 the Council elected R. L. Corsini as its first Missionary Secretary. While at the first, particularly after World War II, the emphasis on missions was the support of the work in Italy, the outreach expanded in the years following 1948.

3. The third major decision made by the Council during this period was to form a Missionary Society. This move was not primarily the incorporation of the Council. Rather it was a decision to incorporate a Missionary Society which would be known as the Missionary Society of the Christian Church of North America. With this move, organization received a new momentum and missions would be programmed on a more sophisticated level than had been done in previous years.

Thus we note that the period 1938-1948 witnessed a major thrust in the promotion of organization, a move intended to help facilitate the work of missions and the work of the Council. With the close of this period there is finally seen the emergence of the CCNA from its Italian Pentecostal background.

Having arrived at the time of the full emergence of the CCNA we will consider some developments taking place from that time on to the present. By 1949 some of the leaders in the earlier history of the Italian Pentecostal Movement had passed away, among whom was Maximilian Tosetto. Others, such as Francescon and Ottolini, had withdrawn

from the Council for reasons they deemed best.

Within the Council of the CCNA, however, a new generation had arisen whose voices were beginning to be heard. This new generation had no interest in the past polemics which created divisions in the movement. They were generally interested in the work of the movement in which they were either born or had been reared. Some of them began to assume responsibilities in leadership. They supported the vehicle of organization set in motion at that time; namely, The Missionary Society of the Christian Church of North America.

The incorporation of the Missionary Society was consummated in the state of Pennsylvania in 1948. Its home address was 211 Shady Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The incorporators were: Frank Maruso, Frank Fortunato, Richard Corsini, Thomas Tedeschi, and Alfred Palma. The immediate cash assets exceeded five thousand dollars. Richard Corsini served as Secretary-Treasurer of the Society while Alfred Palma served as General Council Secretary.

At the 1950 General Council held in Washington, D.C., elections were held in accordance with the latest organizational requirements. Five General Overseers were chosen: Olympus Angelelli, Michael Palma, Peter Dell'Aringa, Frank Maruso, and Carmine Saginario. A Missionary Committee was elected to govern the work of missions. Although the Council had not been incorporated, it remained the final authority in the making of major decisions.

In a later conference, Council approved the formation of an Executive Board comprised of the General Overseers, the Missionary Committee, and the General Secretary. At the Council session held in Albany, New York, in 1952, Carmelo Paglia was elected to serve as General Overseer, with four others serving as Assistant General Overseers. He was succeeded to that office by Frank Fortunato in the 1954 conference held in Syracuse, New York.

This form of organization continued until Council adopted a revised form of organization at its Philadelphia conference in 1963. This revision embraced the incorporation of the Council and the whole movement. The name of the new corporation is "The General Council of the Christian Church of North America." Frank Fortunato, who had been serving

as General Overseer since 1954, was approved by Council in its 1965 session in Syracuse, New York, to serve as full-time General Overseer. He continued in that office until his retirement in 1975.

Regarding the present form of the CCNA, its purpose and function, the reader may acquire further information by reading a brochure, adequately prepared by Guy Bongiovanni, present Director of Missions, approved by the Executive Board of the CCNA. Copies of the brochure may be obtained from **Beacon Enterprises**, Summit Park Mall, Niagara Falls, New York, 14304.

The present headquarters of the CCNA is located at 1818 East State Street (Box 801, Suite 208), Sharon, Pennsylvania, 16146. The present Executive Committee is comprised of a Board of Overseers: General Overseer, Carmine Saginario; and four Assistant General Overseers, Joseph Fiorentino, Joseph DeMola, Carmine Reigle and Joseph Borda. Also comprising the Executive Committee are Department Directors: Frank Bongiovanni, Guy Bongiovanni, John DelTurco, and James DeMola; and a General Secretary, Richard Tedesco. Honorary Personnel are Frank Fortunato, Peter Dell'Aringa, and Richard Corsini.

The General Council of the CCNA claims a membership of 414 credential holders classified as follows: 137 Ordained Ministers, 61 Ministers of the Gospel, 77 Licensed Ministers, and 139 Christian Workers. There are 26 CCNA Missionaries and 306 National Workers overseas. Geographically, the CCNA is comprised of four districts: Eastern, Northwestern, Niagara-Mohawk, and Southern. The total number of churches in fellowship with the CCNA is 113. CCNA publications appearing monthly are "Il Faro" in Italian, and "Vista" in English.

The CCNA has generally placed its principal emphasis on the work of Missions. Although other programs are given prime attention, the work of Missions appears to be the main target. Under the leadership of R. L. Corsini, first Missions Director (1943-1966), the work of CCNA Missions spread to Europe, Africa, South America, Australia, the Philippines, India, and England. Under the direction of the present Director, Guy Bongiovanni, CCNA Missions continue to move forward. At the present time, the funding of this work is at its highest ever in the history of the CCNA.

In closing, we make mention of the Italian Pentecostal Movement in Canada with which the CCNA holds a very close affinity. The largest Italian Pentecostal churches in Canada are in Toronto and Montreal. From the very beginning of the movement in Canada there existed a fellowship among the churches as well as a cooperative effort in missionary endeavor.

The Association of Italian Pentecostal Churches in Canada was governmentally chartered in 1959. Presently, the Association consists of sixteen churches with approximately 2,640 members and eleven Ordained Ministers. The early leaders of this movement were Luigi Ippolito and Ferdinand Zaffuto. The churches have carried on an active missionary program among the thousands of Italian immigrants arriving in Canada.

The official publications of the Association are a quarterly paper titled "Communicato Missionario," printed in Italian, and "Missionary News Bulletin" printed in English. The Association is presently headed by Daniel Ippolito, Superintendent, and M. Spiridigliozzi, General Secretary. The Association is known as "The Italian Pentecostal Church of Canada," with headquarters at 6724 Fabre Street, Montreal, 330, Quebec.

Epilogue

A Goodly Heritage

History records that the American founding fathers held a convention in Philadelphia in 1787 for the purpose of framing a constitution for the newly found Republic. Outside Convention Hall a crowd waited anxiously to learn what form of government had been planned. As the delegates filed out the door, at the close of the convention, a voice from among the crowd asked: "What kind of a government have you given us?" It is said that Benjamin Franklin shouted the reply: "A Republic, if you can keep it!"

In that curt reply, Franklin pointed to the responsibility of the American people in preserving the blessings of liberty—the heritage passed on to them by the founding fathers. The political reality resident within the words of Franklin reminds us of the spiritual reality inherent in God's Word. Just as the American people are responsible for the safeguarding of their political legacy, so are Christians responsible for the safeguarding of their spiritual heritage.

The people of the CCNA, as other Christians, are members of the Body of Christ—"the General Assembly and Church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23). However, CCNA people also identify, in the time process, with a specific family whose spiritual ancestry and ethnic background have been traced in the preceding chapters.

The faith of the CCNA people is certainly not an ethnic faith; it is the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Yet, CCNA people, as a family, relate to an ethnic group whose leaders accepted the faith, passing that "goodly heritage" to their posterity.

This does not mean that CCNA people must necessarily

remind the world of their ethnic background. However, it does mean that CCNA people ought to bear in mind two things: that their fathers, men of a specific ethnic background, accepted a nonethnic faith; and that CCNA people, as a family unit, are responsible for the preservation of that nonethnic spiritual heritage passed on to them by their fathers.

The spiritual heritage of CCNA people is a "goodly heritage," not primarily because they are of the CCNA, nor because their fathers were of Italian origin. After all, in the divine scheme of redemption, ethnic origin becomes meaningless (Gal. 3:28) and organizational structure (CCNA) is reduced to a mere means whereby the work of the Lord may, in some manner, be expedited here on earth. Indeed, CCNA people may say as did the Psalmist: "the Lord is the portion of my inheritance...I have a goodly heritage" (16:5-6).

The CCNA, in its mere denominational and organizational form, is not the heritage of its people. The Lord Jesus Christ—"who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords"—is the portion of the inheritance of CCNA people.

There would be no CCNA without Christ. Therefore, the CCNA as a denomination, becomes part of that heritage, so long as the CCNA continues in its loyalty to Him. Loyalty to Christ is primary. In that manner CCNA people may say: "thou maintainest my lot" (Ps. 16:5). Loyalty to Christ is the source of loyalty to the "goodly heritage."

While the Lord is the true inheritance of God's people and loyalty to Him is due first, there is another aspect to the "goodly heritage" that must be borne in mind—perhaps it may be secondary and subsidiary—nonetheless, it should not be forgotten. This aspect of the "goodly heritage" was brought to Israel's remembrance by the prophet Isaiah:

"...look unto the rock whence ye are hewn and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged...look unto Abraham your father...for I called him alone and blessed him and increased him" (51:1-2).

"The hole of the pit" mentioned by Isaiah is not a symbolical reference to a previous experience in redemption, such as is described in Psalm 40:2. Rather, the prophet is

reminding the nation of a specific relationship to Abraham in its historical origin. Israel's beginning is one of having been hewn from a rock quarry—symbolic of their progenitor, Abraham.

God had revealed Himself to Abraham, redeemed him, blessed him, and prospered him. Old Testament Israel received the legacy of a blessed relationship with God through the fathers, beginning with Abraham. Through the years, Israel did not keep the faith. The legacy was neglected, eventually leading to national ruin. Isaiah called attention to Israel's origin, and to the faith of the fathers. He pointed to Israel's responsibility in keeping the faith of the fathers. God will bless the people—their heritage will be preserved if they honor God as did Abraham!

There is a great truth here readily applicable to CCNA people. God revealed Jesus Christ to the fathers of the Italian Pentecostal Movement, also showing them the truths related to the Holy Spirit. To use a Biblical phrase, many of today's CCNA people were yet "in the loins" of their fathers when those fathers were blessed with the knowledge of the "goodly heritage." In a real sense—those fathers such as Francescon, Ottolini, Angelelli, Tosetto, and others—they are the stone quarry from which today's CCNA people have been hewn.

While the fathers of the Italian Pentecostal Movement were not specially trained men, they were indeed men anointed by the Holy Spirit, wonderfully blessed of the Lord. They passed on to the present CCNA people the knowledge and testimony of the "goodly heritage." They labored faithfully—CCNA people have merely entered into their labors.

The fathers of the Italian Pentecostal Movement may have erred at times in some things, even as we do. Nevertheless, they handed down to us a "goodly heritage"—an invaluable spiritual legacy. CCNA people may say with gratitude and zeal: "the lines are fallen unto us in pleasant places..." (Ps. 16:6). The responsibility is now upon the present generation of CCNA people to continue in the faith of the fathers.

Christian denominations are known to have honored the names of their founding fathers and their traditions. Yet some of them neglected faith and responsibility. In consequence, their heritage eroded. They may have remained as a denomination, holding to a religious form, but are tragically

lacking in the spiritual substance possessed by the fathers.

The CCNA can, through divine assistance, cling to, love, and cherish the "goodly heritage." Again, CCNA people should not only sing, but also apply to their hearts in meaningful commitment the words of the old hymn "Faith of Our Fathers," which we quote in part:

"Faith of our Fathers! we will love
Both friend and foe in all our strife;
And preach thee, too, as love knows how,
By kindly words and virtuous life!
Faith of our fathers, holy faith
We will be true to thee till death!"

Our fathers have now become a part of that "great cloud of witnesses"—those who, although "being dead, yet speak." Just as the voice of a Benjamin Franklin continues to speak to the consciences of the American people saying, "keep the Republic," so the voice of our fathers continues to speak to our consciences saying: "keep the faith and you will preserve the "goodly heritage" for yourselves and your posterity."

May the people of the CCNA continue to exalt the Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, without whom there would not have come into being the Italian Pentecostal Movement, nor the CCNA. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with CCNA people and all of God's children everywhere.

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