

# **“THE LORD WILL GET HIM A BAND”: A.J. TOMLINSON AND THE PENTECOSTAL WORLD-WIDE MISSION BAND**

**Missions & Intercultural Studies Interest Group**

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**Presented at the 45th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies**

## **INTRODUCTION**

On Wednesday, February 15, 1911, a determined and dedicated group of Church of God (Cleveland, TN) ministers boarded the S.S. Miami scheduled to depart Miami, Florida, at 7:00 that evening. These women and men were bound for the British Commonwealth of the Bahamas. They took with them a tent, their Bibles, and musical instruments purchased from the Sears, Roebuck and Co. mail-order catalog. Along with their personal possessions, Carl M. Padgett and A.J. Tomlinson kept journals that have survived the past century and disclose the details of their journey.

Early on the day after their departure, Tomlinson recorded, “We are on the steamer plowing the waves of the deep blue sea this morning, steaming toward Nassau.” He also acknowledged some of the sacrifices the group faced, “I am going farther and farther away from my precious wife and children. God bless them.”<sup>1</sup> Their adventure would last ten weeks until

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<sup>1</sup> A.J. Tomlinson, “Journal of Happenings,” 5 Vols. (Washington, DC: Library of Congress Manuscript Division), February 16. The original manuscripts of five extant volumes of A.J. Tomlinson’s journal are located in the Library of Congress Manuscript Division in Washington, DC, under Tomlinson’s title “Journal of Happenings.” His son, Homer, published an edited transcription of the journal in three volumes with extensive commentary, and the Church of God of Prophecy recently published a transcription in two volumes. See Homer A. Tomlinson, ed. *Diary of A.J. Tomlinson*, 3 Vols. (Queens Village, NY: The Church of God, World Headquarters, 1949-1955); A.J. Tomlinson, *Diary of A.J. Tomlinson, 1901-1924* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2012); and A.J. Tomlinson, *Diary of A.J. Tomlinson, 1925-1943* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2013). This paper will refer to Tomlinson, “Journal” and Tomlinson’s entry date so that the reader may consult any edition.

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April 28. They would face rugged hardship, danger, and exhausting ministry on what was the inaugural tour of the Pentecostal World-Wide Mission Band.<sup>2</sup> They were convinced that the Lord would have a band to reach the nations. At its simplest, their story conveys how a group of ministers attempted to use music to attract an audience for evangelistic purposes. More importantly, their story reveals how their Spirit-baptism experiences and restoration theology enabled them to envision and endure an extraordinary cross-cultural experience in an effort to fulfill the Great Commission.

### **THE BAND MEMBERS**

An unusual group of twelve people formed the Pentecostal World-Wide Mission Band.<sup>3</sup> Three members had joined the band just a few before their departure. While on an evangelistic crusade in Florida, Tomlinson had written in his journal on December 8: “The Lord gave us a great meeting at Crewsville. . . . At night we formally accepted Brother and Sister Haddock and Marion Whidden into the band and pinned badges on them. Quite an impression was made on people in the farewell service.” Band member Lula Williams was from Crewsville, Florida, and Esthil Cecil was from Dublin, Virginia. Roy C. Miller went on to become the first state overseer of Church of God congregations in Mississippi. Miller came into the Church of God as a result of a great revival in Cleveland, Tennessee, in 1908. Shortly after the band returned to the United States, he married band member Lula Williams. Like many early Pentecostals, Miller believed

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<sup>2</sup> Earlier versions of some sections of this paper were published in David G. Roebuck, “Great Cloud of Witnesses: Church of God History and the Great Commission,” in *The Great Commission Connection*, ed. Raymond F. Culpepper (Cleveland, TN: Press, 2011), 601-20.

<sup>3</sup> Band members included Flora E. Bower, J.W. Buckalew, Esthil H. Cecil, W.R. Haddock, Martha Haddock, Efford Haynes, Ella Clyde Cotton Haynes, Roy C. Miller, Carl M. Padgett, A.J. Tomlinson, Marion Whidden, and Lula Williams.

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in divine healing and refused to take medicine or consult with doctors. He died two years after his return from the Bahamas from a cold he had received during a revival meeting.<sup>4</sup>

Efford Haynes had come into the Pentecostal movement in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1902 when he heard a Methodist college student from Charles Fox Parham’s ministry in Topeka, Kansas, preach about the Holy Ghost and fire.<sup>5</sup> His wife, Ella Clyde Cotton Haynes, most often called “Clyde,” was an early woman evangelist in the Church of God.<sup>6</sup> Efford and Clyde had only been married a few months when the band left for the Bahamas. They had been part of an evangelistic team ministering in Gintown, Alabama, when Tomlinson noted in his journal on September 20, 1910. “I had quite a time last night. I, and Brother McLain, and Brother Haynes, and Sister Clyde Cotton marched into the tent to music, and on arriving at the altar I turned and read a few verses from Saint John 2, and then repeated the ceremony and pronounced Brother Haynes and Sister Clyde husband and wife.” Not seeing any incongruity between a wedding and building God’s church, Tomlinson noted in his journal, “After the congratulations, I made a little talk and we received five into the Church.”<sup>7</sup>

J.W. Buckalew came to be called “Old Rough and Ready” and was one of the best known Church of God evangelists in his day. A Georgia native, he came into the Church of God while

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<sup>4</sup> A.J. Tomlinson, “Brief Sketch of the Life and Works of the Compiler,” in *Classified Scriptures on the Church of God and Her Teachings*, comp. Roy C. Miller (Cleveland, TN: Press of Church of God Evangel, 1913), 12-21.

<sup>5</sup> Stan Cooke, “Church of God Chronicles: The History of the Kimberly Church of God,” *Church of God Evangel*, November 2008, 20-21.

<sup>6</sup> Her singing in tongues in a great revival in Cleveland, Tennessee, in 1908 caught the attention of Baptist choirmaster and church clerk F.J. Lee and drew him to the Pentecostal movement. He went on to become the second president of Lee University and the second general overseer of the Church of God. See Charles W. Conn, *Like a Mighty Army: A History of the Church of God, 1886-1996*, Tribute Edition (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2008), 103.

<sup>7</sup> Efford Haynes was a photographer, and we are indebted to him for several important surviving photos of Church of God ministry during this time period. He later served for many years as a state overseer.

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Clyde Cotton was preaching a revival in Boaz, Alabama, in January 1910. That fall, persecutors tried to stop his ministry by putting him in jail and burning his tent in Alabama City, Alabama. Upon his release he planted a thriving Church of God congregation on the ashes of the burned tent. Buckalew joined the band about two weeks before they departed Florida and was designated as the music instructor.<sup>8</sup>

Carl M. Padgett was making his second missionary trip to the Bahamas. He had accompanied Robert and Ida Evans in January 1910. Padgett’s journal records the life of a hard-working, faithful minister. He was from Miami, where his father, Milton, was a Church of God pastor. His journal describes youthful years full of summer work plowing and planting on the family farm and winter work laboring as a janitor.<sup>9</sup> The return of Christ was a frequent theme in his preaching. Already familiar with the Bahama Islands, he would prove to be a natural leader on those occasions when the band divided into smaller ministry teams. Later in 1913, the Church of God appointed Padgett overseer of the Bahamas for a year.

Evangelist Flora E. Bower had already made one trip to the Bahamas as well. After reading about the Bahama’s mission in the *Evening Light and Church of God Evangel*, she and her folding organ took their first missions trip in the summer of 1910 to assist Robert and Ida Evans.

A.J. Tomlinson was general overseer of the Church of God and band leader.<sup>10</sup> It was primarily his theology and vision that created and shaped the ministry of the Pentecostal World-

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<sup>8</sup> Tomlinson, “Journal,” January 30, 1911. See also Conn, *Army*, 125-29; and J.W. Buckalew, *Incidents in the Life of J.W. Buckalew* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.).

<sup>9</sup> The diary of Carl M. Padgett is preserved in the Carl M. Padgett Collection at the Dixon Pentecostal Research Center in Cleveland, Tennessee.

<sup>10</sup> See R.G. Robins, *A.J. Tomlinson: Plainfolk Modernist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); and David G. Roebuck, “A.J. Tomlinson” in *Handbook of Pentecostal Christianity*, ed. Adam Stewart (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012), 208-12.

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Wide Mission Band. Tomlinson had been born in Westfield, Indiana, in 1865, and grew up in the home of nominal Quakers. His early life included an excellent education, and forays into business and politics. Converted as a young groom, Tomlinson channeled his charismatic personality and entrepreneurial spirit into ministry. His Quaker congregation emphasized world missions along with ministry to Native Americans and the poor by establishing industrial homes and schools.

Tomlinson drank deeply from those wells. Friendship with Methodist colporteur J.B. Mitchell led to forming the Book & Tract Company in 1894 as a means of home missionary ministry to the mountain poor in North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. Like many in the American North and Midwest, Tomlinson saw the poor of Appalachia as an important harvest field and began to make ministry trips to the region. In 1899, he relocated his family to the small community of Culberson, North Carolina. His strategy was to reach the children of the mountains and through them take the gospel into their homes.

Tomlinson was part of a stream of “home missionaries” who traveled from the northern United States to the American South around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in order to minister to the poor.<sup>11</sup> He bought property, recruited teachers for a school, boarded children in his home, and opened an orphanage. He also established a periodical called *Samson’s Foxes* in order to help solicit funding and clothing for the ministry. Tomlinson continued to identify himself as a missionary to the Appalachian Mountains at least as late as 1908.

In 1903 Tomlinson cast his lot with the Holiness Church at Camp Creek, which R.G. Spurling had established the previous year in the home of W.F. Bryant. According to most

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<sup>11</sup> This movement of home missionaries was portrayed in the bestselling novel by Catherine Marshall and the television series “Christy.” Christy Huddleston was a schoolteacher, who along with her Quaker missionary friend, Alice Henderson, interacted with the fictional Tennessee town of Cutter Gap in the Great Smokey Mountains. See Catherine Marshall, *Christy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).

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accounts of Church of God history, the Holiness Church continued Spurling’s Christian Union that had been founded in 1886 and later adopted the name “Church of God” in 1907.<sup>12</sup> The Holiness Church immediately selected Tomlinson as their pastor, and the group began to expand into Georgia and Tennessee. In 1904, Pastor Tomlinson relocated to Cleveland, Tennessee, where he had better access to the railroad and could increase his evangelistic efforts.

As Tomlinson’s ministry expanded, so did his vision of the harvest field. He recorded in his journal on December 17, 1905, “This morning I felt a special burden for souls in Central America, and I am not sure yet, but Father may have called me to that field as I was at prayer out in the woods. As the call seemed to come I said, ‘Yes Father,’ and entered into groanings that could not be uttered which lasted for several minutes. The country and people are unknown to me, but I’ll go if God sends me.”<sup>13</sup>

### **SPIRIT BAPTISM EMPOWERMENT**

Tomlinson’s vision, theology, and motivation radically changed when he received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Tomlinson seems to have become aware of the Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism with the Bible evidence of speaking in tongues sometime in 1907. In recalling that year he later wrote, “By the close of the year I was so hungry for the Holy Ghost that I scarcely cared for food, friendship or anything else. I wanted the one thing—the Baptism with the Holy Ghost.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The “official” history of the Church of God is Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*. For a more comprehensive history of the foundational years see Wade H. Phillips, *Quest to Restore God’s House: A Theological History of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), Volume 1, 1886-1923, R.G. Spurling to A.J. Tomlinson, Formation—Transformation—Reformation* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Tomlinson, “Journal,” December 17, 1905.

<sup>14</sup> A.J. Tomlinson, *The Last Great Conflict* (Cleveland, TN: Press of Walter E. Rogers, 1913), 210.

When the Church of God's third General Assembly was scheduled to meet in Cleveland, Tennessee, in January 1908, Pastor Tomlinson invited G.B. Cashwell to come and preach about the Pentecostal experience. Cashwell had been to the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles, had received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and was now preaching about the Spirit throughout the South. While Cashwell was preaching on Sunday morning, January 12, 1908, Tomlinson fell to the floor under the power of the Spirit. He later described his experience, "My mind was clear, but a peculiar power so enveloped and thrilled my whole being that I concluded to yield myself up to God and await results. . . . As I lay there great joy flooded my soul. The happiest moments I had ever known up to that time. I never knew what real joy was before. . . . Oh, such floods and billows of glory ran through my whole being for several minutes!"<sup>15</sup>

Lying on the floor that morning, Tomlinson experienced a vision in which he traveled the world preaching the gospel in each country he visited. For Tomlinson this experience revealed the urgency of reaching the world in the last days. Pentecostal fire was for a real purpose—empowering and enabling the church to win the world for Jesus Christ.

Yet, reflecting the commission of Jesus Acts 1:8, Tomlinson's narrative included his personal Jerusalem and Judea. As he returned to the United States in his vision, his attention focused on his town and on places he already knew. He described the experience in his journal, "Then I came back to Cleveland and seemed to be asked if I was willing to testify or speak on the public square of the city, without any effort my spirit seemed to give consent, then to Chattanooga, then my mind seemed to be carried along the rail road to Cincinnati right on

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<sup>15</sup> Tomlinson, *Last Great Conflict*, 211-12. For an examination of the connection to the Azusa Street Revival through Cashwell see David G. Roebuck, "From Azusa to Cleveland: The Amazing Journey of G.B. Cashwell and the Spread of Pentecostalism," in *The Azusa Street Revival and Its Legacy*, eds. Harold D. Hunter and Cecil M. Robeck Jr. (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2006), 111-25.

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through the city to my old home in Indiana.... I seemed to see us all on a missionary journey.”<sup>16</sup> Tomlinson concluded, “I don’t know if God wants me to go to these places or not, but I am willing to go as He leads.”<sup>17</sup> Although Tomlinson never personally visited many of the places he traveled in his vision, his commitment to world harvest inspired the Church of God to go far beyond what he saw that Sunday morning.<sup>18</sup>

Following Tomlinson’s Spirit baptism experience his journal overflowed with descriptions of Pentecostal worship and ministry. Preaching, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, healings, and casting out demons were common. Evangelism along with caring for the poor and needy became ordinary activities for the Church of God. Charles W. Conn wrote about the aftermath of Tomlinson’s experience, “If A.J. Tomlinson’s work for God was energetic before he received the Holy Ghost, it was prodigious afterward; if his effectiveness was good before, it was miraculous afterward.”<sup>19</sup>

Evangelism became a consuming mission for Tomlinson and by extension the Church of God. When warm weather arrived in the spring of 1908, Tomlinson pressed a tent into active duty in Chattanooga. Following the establishment of the East Chattanooga Church of God that summer, Tomlinson pitched the tent in Cleveland in August for a two-month meeting that radically changed the local congregation.<sup>20</sup> By the next spring, the church was compelled to take

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<sup>16</sup> Tomlinson, “Journal,” January 13, 1908.

<sup>17</sup> Tomlinson, “Journal,” January 13, 1908.

<sup>18</sup> For a history of Church of God missions see Bill George, *Until All Have Heard: The Centennial of Church of God World Missions* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God World Missions, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Charles W. Conn, *Cradle of Pentecost* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 1981), 35.

<sup>20</sup> About 500 people attended the first night’s service in the tent. After a month of crowded meetings, headlines in the local newspaper proclaimed, “Big Holiness Meeting, No Abatement in Interest, Enthusiasm or Attendance.” According to the account, “. . . the religious fervor of the members and converts is at white heat. The Holiness people have practically captured all east and northeast Cleveland, and their strength is materially increasing.” By mid-October cool weather and exhaustion forced the services back to the church house. Spiritual

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the gospel further than Southeast Tennessee. On March 8, 1909, Tomlinson wrote about the previous day's Sunday evening service, "The Spirit indicated that workers were to go out from this place, North, East, South and West and said, 'separate unto me those whom I want for the work whereunto I have called them.' ... The Book of Acts is being reproduced."<sup>21</sup> In late March and early April Tomlinson undertook a preaching tour to Ohio, Indiana, and Alabama. The trip concluded in Florence, Alabama, where Tomlinson set in order the first Church of God congregation in that state.<sup>22</sup>

Returning home for only a day, Tomlinson and T.L. McLain then boarded a train bound for Florida. Florida became a great harvest field, and ministry there changed the face of the Church of God from Caucasian to multicultural and from an American network of congregations to an international movement. Their first stop was Tampa where Tomlinson and McLain organized the first Church of God congregation in the sunshine state. Before leaving Tampa, Tomlinson was invited to preach at the Pleasant Grove Camp Meeting in nearby Durant. The South Florida Holiness Association owned the Pleasant Grove camp ground and conducted camp meetings there in the spring and fall of each year. This was the first of several visits Tomlinson made to Pleasant Grove, which likely inspired the Church of God to begin developing camp grounds. During the last half of May in 1909, Tomlinson preached the Pentecostal message and the importance of being God's church. This latter doctrine proved controversial for some, but by the time Tomlinson departed for home he had taken 174 members into the Church of God and

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results of the ten-week tent meeting included 105 conversions, 163 baptized with the Spirit, and 106 added to the church. Among those new members was a future general overseer, F.J. Lee. It was reported that 5,000 people attended on the night following Lee's Baptism with the Holy Spirit. Conn, *Cradle of Pentecost*, 36-41.

<sup>21</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," March 8, 1909. See also January 2, January 3, January 4, January 10, January 11, and February 20.

<sup>22</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," March 21 through April 15, 1909.

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credentialed 19 ministers. Among the new members were R.M. and Ida Evans and Edmond and Rebecca Barr. From their efforts the Church of God soon bore international fruit.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 112-17.

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## **BEYOND THE UNITED STATES**

It was Edmond S. Barr who was the Church of God's first international connection. Barr was a black Bahamian born on the island of Exhuma in 1868, who had immigrated to Florida in 1893. He was one of many young men who traveled back and forth between Florida and the Caribbean islands in order to find work. In Florida, Edmond met and married Georgia-native Rebecca Clayton. When Tomlinson credentialed them as evangelists on May 31, 1909, they became the first persons of African descent to hold ministerial credentials in the Church of God.

Receiving a call to ministry at the Pleasant Grove Camp Meeting in October 1909, Edmond and Rebecca Barr immediately realized the importance of taking the Pentecostal message to his homeland. The people of the Bahamas were entering an age of hope and optimism. The population of approximately 61,000 lacked luxuries such as running water, electricity, or paved streets. At that time the life-expectancy of a black man in the Bahamas was only 33 years. As a colony of the British Empire the Church of England dominated the islands. Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Roman Catholic congregations were well established. But the message of Pentecost had not yet reached the people of the Bahamas.<sup>24</sup>

Probably as a result of fellowship at the Pleasant Grove Camp Meeting, the Barrs were acquainted with Robert and Ida Evans. Robert Evans was a retired Methodist minister who had been baptized with the Holy Spirit at Pleasant Grove. He previously had served as pastor of

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<sup>24</sup> Much of this information about the Barrs and the Bahama Islands comes from Michael S. Swann, *The Holy Jumpers: A Concise History of the Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas, 1909-1974* (Longwood, Fla.: Xulon Press, forthcoming). Among Swann's discoveries is that the 1920 U.S. Census reveals Rebecca and her parents were born in Florida indicating that she was a citizen of the United States. Previous Church of God histories have assumed that Rebecca was a Bahamian. Using a narrow definition of a missionary as one who takes the gospel to another culture, the Church of God previously identified Robert and Ida Evans as its first missionaries rather than the Barrs. With the discovery that Rebecca Barr was born in the United States, she should now be considered the first Church of God missionary. I have used the Americanized "Edmond" rather than the British spelling of "Edmund," which was probably used in the Bahamas. Edmond also sometimes used the name Edward. See also David G. Roebuck, "Church of God Chronicles: Following a Favorable Wind: Edmond and Rebecca Barr," *Church of God Evangel*, February 2014, 30.

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several Methodist Churches, and Ida had been a housemother at Southerland College. They often kept foster children in their home. Despite their retirement, they too caught a vision of the harvest and partnered with the Barrs to take the gospel to the Bahamas.<sup>25</sup>

As was typical of their practice, attendees at the Pleasant Grove Camp Meeting raised an offering to financially support the Barr’s travel to the Bahamas. In November of 1909, Edmond and Rebecca Barr arrived in Nassau and began preaching. The Evans, along with Carl M. Padgett, joined them on January 4, 1910. Together these five became the first members of the Church of God to take the gospel outside the United States. Their partnership represented the growing breath of the Church of God: it was multinational with citizens of the United States and the Bahamas; it was multi-racial with persons of both European and African heritage; it was multigenerational with both mature and young participants; and it included both male and female ministers.

### **ESTABLISHING THE PENTECOSTAL WORLD-WIDE MISSION BAND**

The vision for the Pentecostal World-Wide Mission Band emerged over time in the spirit of A.J. Tomlinson. Upon forming the band, Tomlinson drafted an agreement entitled “A Life of Faith in God,” which he required each member to sign. That agreement rehearsed his initial concept of a ministry team that evolved into a musical band. The contract began, “Pursuant to a call of God about the year 1894, emphasized again and again since that time by the Spirit of God, and recalled and especially emphasized on March 12, 1909, also emphasized and magnified many times since, I, A.J. Tomlinson, promised the Lord that I would gather together a company of people, men and women, who feel called of God, to be in the company, and whom God has

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<sup>25</sup> See James E. Cossey, *R.M. Evans: The First of His Kind* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, n.d.); and Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 129-32.

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satisfied me by revelation, conversation, providence or otherwise, that they are suitable persons and faithful for service."<sup>26</sup>

I have already noted Tomlinson's vision of traveling the world and the March 7, 1909, service about which he recorded, "The Spirit indicated that workers were to go out from this place North, East, South and West, and said 'Separate unto me those whom I want for the work whereunto I have called them.'"<sup>27</sup>

The following Sunday, Pastor Tomlinson preached his morning message using a "map of the world" and in the evening service there were lengthy messages in tongues and interpretations. According to Tomlinson's report of the work of the Spirit, "He was showing and telling me something of my future work. Told me of several countries I was to carry the Gospel to, besides a lot of work in the U.S. and all America."<sup>28</sup> Whatever Tomlinson's sense of personal ministry and destiny, he increasingly saw the value of an evangelistic team rather than simply an individual evangelist.

Further in the band's contract, Tomlinson recorded that it was about November 6, 1909, that "a cry arose in my heart for a brass band for this company."<sup>29</sup> We know from his journal that he was in Parish, Florida, at the time.<sup>30</sup> Not quite a year later he revisited Parish and recorded, "We came to Parish, Fla., yesterday and we are in the very room where the burden was

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<sup>26</sup> A.J. Tomlinson, "A Life of Faith in God," 1. Wade H. Phillips Archives, Cleveland, Tennessee. Photocopy in the A.J. Tomlinson Collection, Dixon Pentecostal Research Center, Cleveland, Tennessee.

<sup>27</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," March 8, 1909.

<sup>28</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," March 16, 1909.

<sup>29</sup> Tomlinson, "A Life of Faith in God," 1.

<sup>30</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," November 6, 1909.

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laid upon us to pray for the brass band, and we have the instruments with us now and are practicing in the same room where God gave us such victory about it one year ago.”<sup>31</sup>

Tomlinson’s friend and early traveling companion J.B. Mitchell provided the money for the band instruments. Tomlinson ordered them from Sears, Roebuck and Co., whose offices in Chicago, Illinois, had pioneered the mail-order catalog business. The eleven band instruments cost \$124. They arrived on June 14, 1910, and the next day Tomlinson recorded, “[We] had a formal opening of a box of instruments and dedicated them to God. The Lord melted us down with his grace and presence.”<sup>32</sup> The first practice with the musical instruments was on July 6, and over the next few months Tomlinson occasionally reported a practice session or the addition of a new band member.<sup>33</sup>

One more purchase was necessary before the band could begin their international mission, however, Once again J.B. Mitchell provided the financial means. In early January 1911, Tomlinson wrote that he had purchased a tent from M.D. & H.L. Smith Company in Dalton, Georgia. The tent cost \$125, and he had it shipped directly to Miami.<sup>34</sup> Although Tomlinson might not be labeled a “big tent” revivalist,<sup>35</sup> he had been making extensive use of tents since at least the summer of 1904.<sup>36</sup> Especially during warm months and in moderate climates, tents were a good way to enter a community and gain enough people to plant a local

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<sup>31</sup> Tomlinson, “Journal,” October 28, 1910.

<sup>32</sup> Tomlinson, “A Life of Faith in God,” 1; and Tomlinson, “Journal,” June 9 and June 15, 1910.

<sup>33</sup> Tomlinson, “Journal,” July 7, 1910.

<sup>34</sup> Tomlinson, “Journal,” January 12, 1911.

<sup>35</sup> For an excellent study of the use of tents for revivals see Josh McMullen, *Under the Big Top: Big Tent Revivalism and American Culture, 1885-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>36</sup> Tomlinson purchased a tent in Dalton, Georgia, for \$97. See Tomlinson, “Journal,” July 6, 1904.

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church. In addition to being portable, tents attracted people in ways that local houses of worship did not. Tents allowed attendees to open up to the work of God differently than they might ordinarily do. Initially, it was easier to attend a meeting held by a preacher of a different tradition if the setting of that meeting was not a local church. Additionally, the uniqueness of the surroundings of a tent service held people's attention in ways that the familiarity of a church building did not. Finally, the excitement of the tent meeting allowed worshippers to expect and be open to the new and the unusual. Louis Nelson noted when writing about the architecture of revivals that "Without the compartment demanded of refined church spaces, the canvas tent, ...reinforced a sense of spontaneity, heartfelt religion, and immediacy with God."<sup>37</sup> Tomlinson acknowledged these phenomena during a tent meeting in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1908. He recorded in his journal on June 22, "Have been in a tent meeting in Chattanooga....Closed there last night after a siege of 7 weeks. ...The gospel was given out with power.... People would stay for hours and sit on the rough boards with no backs, when they could hardly be kept an hour on nice comfortable pews in the churches."<sup>38</sup>

With the new tent purchased and on its way to Florida, Tomlinson concluded his journal entry on January 12, 1911, "I expect to start south as soon as Mary is able for me to leave and I am able to go."<sup>39</sup> He left Cleveland bound for Miami on January 26. Although we do not know the condition of his wife, Mary, her health would prove to be of great concern before the mission to the Bahamas was completed.

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<sup>37</sup> Louis Nelson, "Architecture and Revivals," and Kenneth O. Brown, "Camp Meetings and Tent Meetings," in *Encyclopedia of Religious Revivals in America*, 2 Vols., ed. Michael McClymond (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 28-32 and 75-81.

<sup>38</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," June 22, 1908.

<sup>39</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," January 12, 1911.

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By the time Tomlinson arrived in Coconut Grove outside of Miami on January 28, 1911, several of the band members were already there. They had pitched the tent and scheduled to have services for two weeks while they prepared and practiced. Carl Padgett and Flora Bower had not yet arrived. Tomlinson recorded, "We now have ten in our band. Each one has an instrument and we have a folding organ besides.... The tent here is arranged so as I preach I face the ocean, and in the daytime I can look out over the deep blue sea and think of the heathen beyond. The cry of my heart is, 'O God, help me bear the responsibilities that naturally fall upon me as a leader of the World-Wide Mission Band, and give me souls, and means to supply our needs.'"<sup>40</sup>

The agreement that each member of the Pentecostal World-Wide Mission Band signed reveals how seriously Tomlinson took his responsibility as leader. The heading for the document read "A Life of Faith in God; Band for Evangelization:--Anywhere in the world the Lord may direct." Following a rationale for organizing the band, the contract noted the call to "go into all the world" and listed several specific nations including the United States, the Bahama Islands, Central and South America, Russia, Japan, and "the country round about Jerusalem." The contract suggested the possibility of hardship and danger including spiritual warfare and persecution such as stoning, whipping and imprisonment. It also acknowledged the uncertainty of time before the Lord's return but committed signees to what providence might allow. Members agreed to settle any misunderstandings or difficulties with other band members "in a Christian like way or with them on my knees in prayer to God." Tomlinson promised to fulfill his obligation as leader and each member agreed to recognize him "as the divinely appointed originator and propagator of this company or band of crusaders...." Members also agreed "to

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<sup>40</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," January 30, 1911.

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accept his counsel and advice, respect and obey him" while in the band. They agreed to give a thirty days' notice if they believed it was God's will to leave the band, and they granted that Tomlinson could dismiss them if they broke the terms of the contract. Each member also pledged to "trust the Lord" for their expenses and to "share my little mite, prayer and faith with any who might seem less fortunate than myself."

Finally Tomlinson made his own promise to the band. "By placing my name at the head of the list below, I, A.J. Tomlinson, voluntarily agree that I will not expect to place any yoke of bondage upon any one, or require any service at the hand of my brother or sister that is not in harmony with a sweet, loving, tender, Christian Spirit. In case I should become a task-master, lording it over God's heritage contrary to God's word, this contract becomes null and void. Let the younger submit to the elder, yea all of us be subject one to another with holy reverence and Godly fear, shall be our motto."<sup>41</sup>

## **PENTECOST AND EMPOWERMENT FOR THE HARVEST**

What inspired band members to make such an obligation? Today the Bahama Islands are a vacation destination. But that was not the case in 1911. And although it is difficult for us to evaluate their comprehension of the hardships and persecution they might endure, they were committing their time and resources, sacrificing the comforts and benefits of home and family, and facing unknown risks and dangers.<sup>42</sup> What was their motivation?

At the heart of their action was a connection between their Pentecostal experience and their commitment to fulfill the Great Commission. They took seriously the work of Christ and

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<sup>41</sup> "A Life of Faith in God," 1-3.

<sup>42</sup> It was not unreasonable that band members might expect violent persecution; early members of the Church of God had experienced beatings, whippings, destruction of a tent, and incarceration in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee.

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His prayer for the Father to send the Holy Spirit—a prayer the Father answered when He poured out the Spirit during the Jewish Feast of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2. The Feast of Pentecost was the Feast of Harvest, and early Pentecostals believed that the fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit that they were experiencing was a supernatural enablement to reach the harvest in the last days.

A.J. Tomlinson rooted his theology of the Great Commission in God’s love. In his book, *The Last Great Conflict*, Tomlinson reminded readers that God is love and God’s love is demonstrated in the works of God and His people. The love of God caused Joseph to care with compassion for his older brothers who had treated him cruelly. The love of God enabled David to bless with song Saul and other enemies who were attempting to destroy him. Most amazing of all, the love of God compelled the Father to give His only begotten son for a sinful world. Referring to the gift of Christ to the world, Tomlinson wrote, “then love gave love.”<sup>43</sup> Yet God’s love did not stop giving with the gift of His son. In Christ all obtain the fullness of God’s love and are enabled to give our possessions and our very lives to reach the lost. Tomlinson concluded, “This world is dying and going to hell for want of love. They must be loved.”<sup>44</sup>

For Tomlinson, the recognition that there is a harvest that needs to be gathered was essential to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Tomlinson challenged the Church of God to see both the magnitude of the harvest to be reached as well as the personal nature of that harvest. He reminded readers that the millions of lost in the United States are only a small portion of the whole world. Continents and nations need to be reached, as do unknown villages.

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<sup>43</sup> Tomlinson, *Last Great Conflict*, 21.

<sup>44</sup> Tomlinson, *Last Great Conflict*, 26.

Tomlinson's language in his chapter titled "The World Is Lost" expressed the urgency with which he believed the Church of God must act. He insisted that a Godly recognition of the value of souls and the reality of hell will cause any church that is half asleep to wake up and see the harvest. He called for immediate action. Rather than investing in legacies for unborn children, lives and resources should be spent now on living people who are dying and going to hell today. Rather than shifting the responsibility to future generations, Tomlinson challenged the church to put today's resources into the harvest. Those who cannot go should use all means available to send those who are willing and able to go. Fundamental to Tomlinson's challenge was a sense that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will enable the church to have the same degree of miraculous results that the early church experienced following the Acts 2 outpouring of the Spirit.<sup>45</sup>

An overwhelming sense of living in the last days was significant to the Church of God and the Pentecostal World-Wide Mission Band's motivation to fulfill the Great Commission. This was reflected in the title of the denomination's first periodical, *THE EVENING LIGHT and Church of God Evangel*, launched in 1910 with Tomlinson as editor. The words "THE EVENING LIGHT" printed in large capital letters on the masthead proclaimed with certainty that the church is now in the "evening" of the last days. But rather than a message of despair, the Church of God was proclaiming the "evangel" or good news of the Gospel. Tomlinson wrote in the lead article of the inaugural issue, "The command to go, the command to evangelize is just as forcible today upon us upon whom the ends of the world have come as it was when first uttered by our Lord and great Head of the Church." He continued, "The Holy Spirit was given to the disciples in the morning to give them power to accomplish just what they did accomplish. He is

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<sup>45</sup> Tomlinson, *Last Great Conflict*, 27-34.

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given to us today for the same purpose. We dare not falter. ...The time is short. The harvest is ripe. The sickle must be furbished and put into use."<sup>46</sup>

Closely related to their use of the Biblical language of evening light to describe living in the last days, Church of God pioneers also understood that their experience of the Holy Spirit was the fulfillment of the biblical promise of the latter rain. They connected Joel's prophecy with the twentieth century outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In Israel the early rain was for planting and the latter rain was for the final growth just before the harvest. They believed that the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was for the planting of the church and the outpouring of the Spirit in these last days is to prepare for the final harvest before the Lord's return.<sup>47</sup>

They understood that the Holy Spirit equips the church to reach the last days harvest. First the Holy Spirit enables the believer to speak about Jesus. Here Tomlinson reminded his readers of the words of Jesus, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father he shall testify of me" (John 15.26).<sup>48</sup> For Tomlinson, the biblical examples of speaking in tongues were the fulfillment of Jesus' promise that the Spirit will testify of Jesus. Tomlinson wrote that it will be those who have gone "back to Pentecost" that will reach the harvest. Along with Spirit empowered speech, returning back to Pentecost includes the restoration of the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship along with manifestations of signs and wonders. The results of a complete return to Pentecost

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<sup>46</sup> A.J. Tomlinson, "Apology for Above Title," *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel*, March 1, 1910, 1. An emphasis on the evening light and latter rain was common among holiness and Pentecostal restorationists. See as an example D. Wesley Myland, *The Latter Rain Covenant and Pentecostal Power* (Chicago: Evangel Publishing House, 1910).

<sup>47</sup> For references to the latter rain see Marion T. Whidden, "Latter Rain Revival," *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel*, March 1, 1910, 3; and T.L. McLain, "The Latter Rain," *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel*, March 1, 1910, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Tomlinson, *Last Great Conflict*, 93.

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will be a supernatural spread of the Gospel. Tomlinson concluded that when the church in his day was as fully Pentecostal as the church in Acts, they would have the same evangelistic results that the early Christians experienced. Thousands would be saved in one day, and the gospel would be taken to the ends of the earth.<sup>49</sup>

This theological challenge to return to Pentecost saturated the fabric of the early Church of God. The language was not just rhetoric meant to inspire members, but early ministers and members lived out this theology to the best of their ability. It was with this theological understanding that the Pentecostal World-Wide Mission Band embarked on a journey to reach the whole world beginning with the Bahamas.

## **THE BAHAMAS MISSION**

The Pentecostal World-Wide Mission Band steamed out of Miami at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, February 15. The majority of them would not see the United States again until April 28. On Thursday, they arrived in Nassau on New Providence Island, where they ministered for the next month. They quickly connected with the Evans's and Barrs and began to locate places to conduct services.

Much of their ministerial activity is described in Tomlinson and Padgett's journals. The band frequently divided into small groups in order to reach a larger number of people. On one Sunday they conducted meetings in nine different locations.<sup>50</sup> They held street meetings, meetings in homes, in the Market, at the Sponge Exchange, and wherever else they could. They had meetings in Nassau, Bain Town, Grant's Town, and Free Town on New Providence. After having to pay a pound for duty to get their tent out of customs, they had it set up by February 21<sup>st</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Tomlinson, *Last Great Conflict*, 100-102 and 115.

<sup>50</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," February 26, 1911.

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and began holding services in the tent even before they were able to secure seats. Padgett and Tomlinson frequently reported large gatherings in the market and streets as well as a crowded tent. On more than one occasion Tomlinson estimated the attendance at evening services at the tent to be about 2,000 people.<sup>51</sup> Although they shared the preaching, Tomlinson preached the most often, including multiple services on many days. On the first Sunday in Nassau he reported that he preached six sermons that day.<sup>52</sup>

Tomlinson would often play the drum as the band marched through the streets in order to attract a crowd. Playing their instruments well may have been a challenge for these would-be musicians. Padgett recorded on Friday, February 28, that he had started to learn to play the cornet.<sup>53</sup> They had band practice whenever they could, but even the casual observer has to wonder if they band was ever very good musically. On April 6, Padgett penned the reality and the optimism of the band, "In the afternoon we went over to the cocoanut grove and had a band practice, and the Lord went with us and gave us a special blessing; somehow we are looking forward to the time when the Lord will get Him a band, that will go through the nations, carrying the glorious gospel [with] signs following, somehow the blessings of the Lord followed us from the band practice to the night service, and three received their Pentecost."<sup>54</sup> The next day Tomlinson recorded, "We are still practicing with our instruments and learning to march, form a circle and commence playing, so we can commence a street meeting in that way."<sup>55</sup> Padgett added on April 8, "Spent part of the afternoon in the cocoanut grove trying to conquer my

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<sup>51</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," March 6, March 7, and March 14, 1911.

<sup>52</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," February 19, 1911.

<sup>53</sup> Padgett, "Diary," February 24, 1911.

<sup>54</sup> Padgett, "Diary," April 6, 1911.

<sup>55</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," April 7, 1911.

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cornet."<sup>56</sup> While Tomlinson did write once that "The brass band rendered excellent service and a good impression was made,"<sup>57</sup> just days before they headed for home he admitted, "Five of us can play real well for our practice."<sup>58</sup>

One of the challenges for those from the southern United States may have been the more inclusive racial situation of the Bahamas. While Jim Crow laws shaped the social conditions of the United States, segregation was a less accepted practice in some areas of the Bahamas. There is some evidence that members of the Pentecostal World-Wide Mission Band may have attempted to enforce segregated seating in some worship services and raised local indignation as a result.<sup>59</sup> Padgett always indicated in his journal when his interaction was with a person of color, and some of his language would be offensive according to today's norms.<sup>60</sup> Near the end of the trip Padgett acknowledged, "Some of our party are of Southern blood, but to sleep in a colored man's house and sometimes on their bed is getting to be nothing with us now."<sup>61</sup>

Although the Bahamian people generally received the band, Tomlinson reported some opposition and threats. There were several occasions when outsiders tried to disrupt services including the evening of March 9. Tomlinson confessed,

Tonight I had just finished my discourse with good effect on the congregation when a man came bolting in and right up to me drunk. I got our folks to sing and talk to him a little, and when the song was over, I stood on the altar and held him round the neck and prayed a prayer for the congregation and the man, too, until

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<sup>56</sup> Padgett, "Diary," April 8, 1911.

<sup>57</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," March 24, 1911.

<sup>58</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," April 22, 1911.

<sup>59</sup> Swan, *Holy Jumpers*, 4-5. This is not to say that segregation and racial division did not exist in the Bahamas. Some areas including Nassau were segregated, while some communities, especially in the Out Islands were less so. For a discussion of race in the Bahamas see Gail Saunders, *Bahamian Society after Emancipation* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1990), 1-17.

<sup>60</sup> Padgett, "Diary," March 16, March 31, April 12, April 13, April 18, and April 19, 1911.

<sup>61</sup> Padgett, "Diary," April 19, 1911.

many tears were shed. This too while the man tried to pull away from me, but I held him fast and prayed the harder. It knocked us out of the altar service, but God helped us to get victory anyway. I have been in tough places and had hard times before, but I never struck such a place as this before. I feel somewhat perplexed as to just what to do, but God will direct and help me.<sup>62</sup>

Perhaps not all of the disturbances should be considered persecution, however. In describing the tent service on March 14 Tomlinson lamented, "I don't think I ever saw such an unruly crowd in my life....Of course there was quite a number who revered God, but the majority [was] wild and unruly. Just about the time I dismissed, two women got into a fight, and how they scratched and tore their clothes was a plenty. Some men I suppose undertook to separate them and they got into it and there was quite a rabble, but I succeeded in getting the crowd away after working several minutes. We decided it was best to hold services now for a while in private homes....We are now looking to the Lord for directions about going out to the islands."<sup>63</sup>

Beginning with Ragged Island, the band visited Out Islands and cays from March 17 until April 22.<sup>64</sup> While on these islands they held services in a variety of places including borrowed churches, homes, community halls, and numerous outdoor locations. It was common for them to find a suitable site along a street or just outside of a village to conduct a worship service. As an example, Tomlinson described their first service in Clarence Town on Long Island, "We took our instruments, band and organ, and went down on the street and held a nice service at seven o'clock. Two-hundred or more people gathered to hear as we played, sang, prayed and preached.

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<sup>62</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," March 9, 1911; and Padgett, "Diary," March 8, 1911.

<sup>63</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," March 15, 1911.

<sup>64</sup> Tomlinson identifies "Ragged, Long, Little Exuma, Exuma, and Farmers Cay" in Tomlinson, "Brief Sketch of the Life and Works," 15.

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A gentleman volunteered to take up a collection for us because they were so well pleased."<sup>65</sup>

Also on Long Island at a place called Deadman's Cay, Padgett recorded, "We spend a large part of the day on band practice, then walk about a mile and a half and hold a little meeting right out in the road. Tonight we again have a meeting on our rock hill, where something over a hundred people congregated and sat on the rocks, and one full bearded rather old man got up in a tree nearby while brother Buckalew preached to them."<sup>66</sup> Along their journey the band conducted several water baptism services, visited homes to pray for the sick,<sup>67</sup> and on one occasion took members into the Church of God.<sup>68</sup>

The band depended on offerings from home, offerings received in their worship services, and the goodness of those to whom they ministered.<sup>69</sup> While visiting the Out Islands, the islanders often blessed them with food. Describing one of many such occasions, Tomlinson penned on April 1, "They bring us food of all kinds....Chicken, eggs, sweet potatoes, crabs, onions, beans, peas, watermelon, papayas, grits, sugar, etc. I have learned to eat crab and lobster."<sup>70</sup> Toward the end of their trip Tomlinson recorded, "God supplied our needs in a wonderful way. We were almost compelled to eat four meals yesterday; the people supplied us so bountifully."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," March 30, 1911.

<sup>66</sup> Padgett, "Diary," April 11, 1911.

<sup>67</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," March 31, 1911.

<sup>68</sup> Padgett, "Diary," April 6 and April 9, 1911. Tomlinson recorded, "Last Sunday morning as I preached, the hearts of the people were melted as I showed the Church of God, its importance, etc. At the close of the discourse, at a proposition as to how many wanted to join the Church of God (Bible Church) I suppose 60 or 70 rose up. We had quite a time shaking hands.... I have not learned the exact number that came into the Church. Sister Bower has the names." Tomlinson, "Journal," April 11, 1911.

<sup>69</sup> Padgett, "Diary," March 9, 1911.

<sup>70</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," April 1, 1911.

<sup>71</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," April 12, 1911.

Along with the blessings came the challenges of travel in an under developed country. The band often experienced rough waters and sea sickness when traveling from island to island.<sup>72</sup> In addition to the larger boats they traveled by sail boat and pack horse as well as frequently walking to their destinations.<sup>73</sup> Getting to one particular village on Long Island involved a fourteen-hour walk over rocky terrain. As was often the case, they were accompanied on that trip by local Bahamians accustomed to walking barefooted. Apparently desiring to identify with the Bahamians, Roy Miller removed his shoes as well. Tomlinson later remembered that Miller "walked over those sharp stones barefooted for several miles." Tomlinson continued, "I insisted that he was making a mistake as his feet were tender while the feet of the natives were tough and hard. He said but little while I was talking with him, but his countenance and gathering tears spoke to me louder than words, so I said no more and left him in the hands of the Lord. I never knew how much his feet were pierced with those sharp stones until the blood ran out, nor how sore they were afterward, but I never heard a murmur or one word of complaint escape the lips of that noble self sacrificing boy."<sup>74</sup> Although many might question the judgement of Miller on that particular occasion, the band certainly faced hardships on the islands. Arriving on Exuma Island a few days later, they walked, carrying their luggage and band instruments, through briars so thick that the thorns tore their clothes and flesh until they were bleeding.<sup>75</sup> They fought mosquitoes and sandflies, which frequently made it difficult to

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<sup>72</sup> Padgett, "Diary," April 23, 1911.

<sup>73</sup> Padgett, "Diary," April 10, 1911.

<sup>74</sup> Tomlinson, "Brief Sketch of the Life and Works," 15-16; and Tomlinson, "Journal," April 11, 1911.

<sup>75</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," April 18, 1911.

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sleep.<sup>76</sup> They slept in rented houses, donated rooms, sometimes on the floor, and even outdoors on the decks of the boats on which they journeyed.<sup>77</sup>

Over a period of time the Pentecostal World-Wide Mission Band diminished in number due to attrition. Tomlinson wrote on March 7, "Two of our band members are leaving us this morning. Esthil Cecil and Marion Whidden. The battle here is on and it is hard to give them up right now when they are needed so much, but God will not forsake me." In the same entry he reported "about 2,000 people" at the tent the night before with some conversions and one baptized with the Holy Ghost. He concluded, "God is giving great victory right now over discouragements and opposition."<sup>78</sup> During the second week of April, Efford Haynes and the three remaining women left those touring the islands and returned to Nassau because Clyde Haynes was too ill to continue.<sup>79</sup>

On April 22, the remaining members boarded a "sailboat bound for Nassau." Likely exhausted, Tomlinson recorded both the liberty and frustration of his most recent preaching opportunities. He concluded in his journal, "I feel now that we are about done for the present on the Bahamas. We all feel drawn back to America."<sup>80</sup>

Tomlinson's personal trials were not yet concluded, however. When he arrived back in Nassau there were sixteen letters awaiting him. Four were from his family describing difficulties at home. His wife, Mary, was seriously ill; his children, Iris and Homer, were also sick; his daughter, Halcy, was struggling to take care of all of them as well as keep up with her school

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<sup>76</sup> Padgett, "Diary," April 2, 1911.

<sup>77</sup> Padgett, "Diary," April 23, 1911.

<sup>78</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," March 7, 1911.

<sup>79</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," April 11, 1911.

<sup>80</sup> Tomlinson, "Journal," April 22, 1911.

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work; and his youngest, five-year-old Milton, was described as “naughty” due to a lack of proper supervision. They all desperately wanted their husband and father back home. Along with the letters, a telegram arrived, “Notify Tomlinson wife dangerously ill.”<sup>81</sup>

Yet, getting back to Miami proved to be an unexpected challenge. A storm was approaching as the band arrived in Nassau on April 23. It delayed their departure until the morning of Thursday, April 27, and even then the waves were high. Padgett recalled, “After we get out of the harbor, we find the sea rolling high, more than I had ever been in before. And as I would see one of those big swells, like a little hill come rolling towards us, and the Francis E would turn to one side, I would hold hard to the railing. We had this rough sea for something over 30 miles, and before we got over it, I had lost my breakfast in good shape, then felt better and enjoyed the rest of the trip.”<sup>82</sup>

Despite the storm, the Frances E was able to make record time getting to Miami. Once there Tomlinson received good news that his wife, Mary, was “resting easy.” He and Buckalew took the 6:00 p.m. train north so that he could be with his family in Cleveland, Tennessee, as soon as possible.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is difficult to evaluate all the results of the Pentecostal World-Wide Mission Band in the Bahamas. Conversions, Holy Spirit baptisms, water baptisms, healings, attendance at services, and church memberships were all noted but with imprecise numbers. They set one Church of God congregation in order at Clarence Town on Long Island, which doubled the

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<sup>81</sup> Tomlinson, “Journal,” April 26, 1911.

<sup>82</sup> Padgett, “Diary,” April 27, 1911. Praising the endurance of Miller, Tomlinson remembered, “Wile going from island to island on the small sail vessels he was nearly always sea sick and specially [sic] so during the storms that would rock the boat. Though he looked pale and worn yet he always met our gaze with a smile. There was never a murmur escaped his lips. He seemed satisfied as he realized he was in the service of the Lord.” Tomlinson, “Brief Sketch of the Life and Works,” 15.

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number of organized congregations in the island nation.<sup>83</sup> Many Bahamians heard the gospel and received Christian literature. Tomlinson made personal relationships that lasted for the remainder of his life and strengthen those that continued the work there. Their journey was undoubtedly an inspiration to Church of God members and friends in the United States. Regrettably, issues of the *Church of God Evangel* published from 1911 to 1914 have been lost, so we do not know how the trip was reported and received back home.

Although the record only indicates two Church of God congregations in the Bahamas at the end of 1911, growth did follow the early mission efforts there and throughout the Caribbean. Today the Church of God of Prophecy, founded by Tomlinson following his removal from the office of general overseer in 1923, is the largest Pentecostal denomination in the nation, and the Church of God is the second largest.<sup>84</sup> Allen Anderson has reported that the Church of God and the Church of God of Prophecy are the largest Pentecostal denominations in the English-speaking Caribbean.<sup>85</sup> Also according to Anderson, the Church of God “is now the largest Pentecostal work in the British Caribbean,” and “Pentecostalism has become one of the most significant expressions of Christianity in the Caribbean islands and wherever their inhabitants have spread.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> See letter from R.M. Evans to the General Assembly in Church of God, *Echoes from the General Assembly* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God, 1912), 9-10.

<sup>84</sup> See Swann, *Holy Jumpers*, for a history of the Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas. For a discussion of the exclusion of Tomlinson from the Church of God see Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 207-20; and Phillips, *Quest to Restore God’s House*, 466-635.

<sup>85</sup> Allan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 89-91.

<sup>86</sup> Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 199.

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Their trip to the Bahamas was not the last journey for the Pentecostal World-Wide Mission Band, but it was their longest and most challenging. Upon their return to the United States, they occasionally ministered in the South for at least the next three years.<sup>87</sup> Although they never reached the entire world for Christ, their Pentecostal experience, restoration theology, and commitment to fulfill the Great Commission enabled them to sacrificially travel further than most of their day.

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<sup>87</sup> Phillips states that the band traveled throughout Florida from 1911 to 1914. Phillips, *Quest to Restore God's House*, 254.

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